

WHY DETROIT IS DYING ■ GRAND OLD PROBLEM ■ HOPE'S HAWKS

DECEMBER 15, 2008

# The American Conservative

Spirit  
'76  
of

Just a little bit of  
Democratic history  
repeating...



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## WHEN DID THEY KNOW IT?

I have been reading Gary Brecher for years, and think very well of him. In his latest essay (Nov. 17), however, he goes a little off his game.

I hope I don't have to spend the rest of my life hearing people say things like: "they [Bush's neocon advisers] were convinced that every Muslim on the planet really wanted, deep in his heart, to be magically turned into an Ohio Republican. ... So we poured American blood and treasure into the Iraqi dust to prove the half-baked theories of a bunch of tenth-rate professors. The most expensive experiment in the history of the world, all to learn something any 10-year-old could have told them: people don't take to foreign troops on their streets, and not everybody wants to be like us."

It's barely plausible even on its own terms—that the neocons failed to learn or apply or had forgotten or somehow missed "something any 10-year-old could have told them." Has it not occurred to Brecher that there might be a better explanation?

**Q:** What's the simpler reason they made the "we'll turn Iraq into Ohio" argument?

**A:** Because it would sell to the rubes.

**Q:** So you are saying they lied? They didn't believe Iraq would ever become a decent, peaceful, modern state?

**A:** Maybe, maybe not; depends on the neocon in question. We'll never know. The real point is they probably didn't care. If Iraq goes post-Muslim Western commercial, great. If not, so what? So they fight on in a guerrilla war. How much damage can they do? A few thousand here and there? Either way it's a net win.

**Q:** Are you accusing...

**A:** Relax, I'm not signing warrants. I'll stipulate that they were all acting in good faith, given the various options and

probabilities, blah blah blah. But these were the people who were saying, a la Madam Albright, that 500,000 Iraqi kids dead due to the embargo was an "acceptable price"; these were the guys saying to bomb Belgrade; these are the ones saying that cluster-bombing civilian areas (aka collateral damage) is a tragic, albeit necessary part of this prudent, necessary war.

Let's not be naïve. They didn't commit a wishful-thinking intellectual error, and they aren't dumb. Let's admit the higher probability answer: they knew and didn't care. And we knew they were feeding us a line, and we didn't care either.

**Q:** Hold it. Maybe we didn't care about the Iraqis—women, children, and all that. But are you saying we didn't care about our own troops being sent on this dubious mission?

**A:** That's what I'm saying. The neocons didn't care about the troops. I'd wager if you spent a few hours deposing them, the fact that our Army is all-volunteer would come out, and the response would eventually boil down to, "Hey, that's what these guys signed up for." And yes, I'm also saying that America as a whole is morally on the hook. It's like that dialogue in "Braveheart": "You lied to me!" "You let yourself be deceived."

So spare me the "neocons were dumb to believe Iraq would turn into Ohio" nonsense. These grown-up guys, smart enough to become advisers to the political leadership of the most powerful military on the planet, weren't convinced of something a 10-year-old knew? Please. It's nice to imagine that some massively dumb, partially blind, amazing social phenomena led us into this debacle, but the truth seems simpler and more banal: the neocons didn't care and neither did we.

CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL COLLINS  
*New York, N.Y.*

## FRIENDS TO OUR LEFT

Bravo for running Alexander Cockburn's, "Long Train of Abuses" (Nov. 17). He correctly points out that the erosion of our rights has been a bipartisan matter over the years. From libertarians to leftists, from traditional conservatives of the non-neo stripe to liberals dissatisfied with the seemingly bottomless pit of hypocrisy in the Democrat Party, there is a common agenda that is pro-liberty, antiwar, and anti-empire, whatever else we may disagree on.

And yet political thought and activity, at least of the electoral variety, are largely confined to the Republican/Democrat divide. Certainly a large part of our shared sentiment does not issue in effective political action because we remain shackled to other differences, often quite minor ones compared to the larger issues of war and liberty. In fact, all too often the different factions with this common agenda are not even aware of one another's views, resulting in the most absurd stereotypes. Thus the Republican/Democrat dichotomy becomes little more than a strategy of divide and rule by an elite that has an agenda quite different from that of the vast majority.

When *The American Conservative* takes the lead in running articles like the one by Cockburn, some barriers begin to come down, and advances become possible. Now if only we could convince *The Nation* to run a piece or two by Pat Buchanan or Justin Raimondo.

JOHN V. WALSH, MD

*Via e-mail*

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[WORLD]

## MOURNING IN MUMBAI

On Nov. 26, the commercial capital of the world's largest democracy, India, suffered one of the most dramatic terrorist attacks since Sept. 11. Over the course of 60 hours, radical Islamists staged attacks on Mumbai's train station, three hotels, a café, and a Jewish center, murdering 183 people. From the chaos of those three grim days came stories of heroism and grace, as many Indians sacrificed their lives to shield others. The terrorists aimed to humiliate India, paralyze its economy, and provoke war with Pakistan, the hapless ally of the United States. Having failed on the first two counts, they may yet accomplish that final goal.

The Hindu Bharatiya Janata party in India is chastising the ruling Congress party for being soft on terrorism and is slyly blaming the Pakistani government for the attacks. But allowing reprisals against Muslims in India or moving toward direct conflict with Islamabad would play into the extremists' hands. The former would polarize the diverse population of India, the latter risks incalculable disaster.

Our president-elect has already mishandled the diplomatic situation in the subcontinent. During his campaign, Obama suggested that he would send American forces into Pakistan to pursue terrorists. And he offended Indian officials by floating the possibility of the U.S. mediating disputes over the Kashmir, a controversy that President Bush was right to avoid.

While many nations have expressed admirable solidarity with India, the zeal to vanquish terrorism should not draw the U.S. or India into a conflict that would weaken a fragile Pakistani regime that has, however imperfectly, suppressed the Taliban and pursued détente with India. The terrorists in Mumbai had a script. Like the brave Indians who defied them, we must not play our assigned part.



[POLITICS]

## GLOBAL GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

Anyone who expected nation-building to go the way of the Bush administration misunderstands Barack Obama. The democracy crusade continues, perhaps not at gunpoint but well beyond Mesopotamia.

In announcing his foreign-policy team, Obama said, "They share my pragmatism about the use of power, and my sense of purpose about America's role as a leader in the world." We're learning what that looks like.

The *Financial Times* describes Obama's picks as "tilt[ing] towards the hawkish wing of the Democratic party." That much is true—but their ambitions reach far beyond regime change. The *New York Times*' resident neoncon, David Brooks, was explicit—and more than a little enthusiastic—about the Obama program. He cited an emblematic speech delivered by Robert Gates, the Bush defense secretary recruited for another tour: "In recent years, the lines separating war, peace, diplomacy and development have become more blurred." Gates

speaks of "full spectrum operations" and "multidisciplinary security and development campaigns." Translation: nothing is beyond the scope of American tutelage.

Brooks believes "Platonic concepts like realism and neoconservatism" are passé—convenient for those desperate to shake the sands of Iraq from their wingtips while continuing to ignore historic and human limits. "The foreign policy doctrine of the future," Brooks writes, "will be hammered out in a bottom-up process as the U.S. and its allies use their varied tools to build government capacity in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, the Philippines and beyond." He says that secretary of state nominee Hillary Clinton and presumptive NATO commander James Jones are "champions of this approach."

At the very least, expect it to mean increases in foreign-aid spending, a larger State Department, and an extension of President Bush's fledgling civilian corps. Where does it end? It doesn't. George W. Bush told Americans that the world would not be peaceful until it was democratic. Under Barack Obama, it won't be democratic until it is developed.

Brooks might be right. Neoconservatism could well be passing from the scene. But the elevation of liberal internationalism—equally utopian and massively more invasive—is almost enough to make us miss the men who conned the Right.

[ECONOMY]

## BORROWED TIME

It's official—according to the National Bureau of Economic Advisers, the United States is in recession and has been since December 2007. That puts the current downturn on pace to surpass the 16-month recessions in 1981-82 and 1973-75 as the longest since World War II. It will almost certainly be the deepest in decades.

Outside of plunging real estate prices and swooning stocks, America still feels surprisingly normal. Unemployment has ticked up over the past year, and at an accelerating pace, but remained at a modest 6.5 percent through October—though that translates into 10.1 million Americans out of work. Still, it's a far cry from the 10.8 percent unemployment of '81-'82. Economic optimists insist that while the worse may be yet to come, the country is not on the edge of disaster.

But there are reasons to doubt the Pollyannas. Amity Shlaes, writing at Bloomberg.com, points to a silver lining that is actually a storm cloud: "Today, a greater share of the population works in parts of the economy that are buffered against recession—government, schools or health care." Should we sigh in relief? The semi-nationalization of America's financial sector led conservatives to cry socialism. But with government and the highly regulated fields of education and healthcare as the three largest service-sector employers, some 40 million Americans work for the state directly or at one remove—and that doesn't include government contractors. Buffered against recession? You bet: government will only grow, and reach deeper into other sec-

tors, as the private economy declines.

Right now, Americans marking down the prices of vastly inflated stocks and houses are locked in struggle with a government desperately trying to keep prices up. If the people succeed, prices will fall, which will lead to more layoffs, less consumption, and greater contraction—but savers will be rewarded and speculators punished, which is exactly what needs to happen to restore the system to solvency. If the government wins out, however, we'll escape deflation at the price of inflation, which will vacuum the wealth right out of Americans' pockets, rewarding debt-addicts and punishing the frugal. The difference between a prolonged recession and a full-blown catastrophe hangs in the balance.

[WAR]

## RISE OF THE MACHINES

Reality took another step toward science fiction last month with reports that the Pentagon has established a \$4 billion project to build ethically attuned robot-roops. The idea is to program "automated war systems" that will comply with the Geneva Conventions.

Killing machines with a conscience? Clearly the military's whizzgeeks have not heeded Hollywood's warnings—"Terminator," "I, Robot," "Robocop," et al—in which robots, designed to help humanity, malfunction, slaughter everyone, and destroy the world. *Deus ex machina*—or at least *Deus ex* governor of California.

Ronald Arkin, a consultant for the Army, says that automatons can "perform more ethically than human soldiers." He insists that because the robots "do not need to protect themselves ... they can be designed without emotions that cloud their judgment or result in anger and frustration with ongoing battlefield events."

True, there are no vengeful androids yet. But what about empathy and mercy in the theater of war? Error: cannot compute. Exterminate! Exterminate! ■

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# The Spirit of '76

Welcome back, Carter

By Philip Jenkins

HISTORICAL ANALOGIES have been much in vogue since this election. Are we living at the end of 1932, preparing to face the glories and disasters of a revived New Deal? Or are we in a mirror-image 1980, the beginning of an era of liberal dominance, with a massive party realignment that might not even reach full fruition for another decade or so? These questions matter, not just because such debates give employment to academic historians. Deciding which year offers the closest parallel to the present forces conservatives to think how they will adjust to the new order. Just how radically have public attitudes shifted?

Actually, the year that offers the closest historical parallels to the present might be neither 1932 nor 1980 but 1976, and that analogy helps us understand the directions in which the country will be moving. Both in government and opposition, people might want to hold off on planning for the next New Deal, still less for a coming generation of liberal hegemony. In three or four years, the main political fact in this country could well be a ruinous crisis of Democratic liberalism.

Why 1976? That was the year Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford for the presidency by a slim but convincing margin: Ford won 48 percent of the popular vote, a little more than John McCain's 46 percent. Democrats did significantly better in the House in 1976 than they did last month. They held a two-to-one majority of seats, and they retained a supermajority of 61 in the Senate. Broadly, however, the 1976 results look similar to 2008.

The mood of the country in 1976 also parallels our present situation, with a pervasive sense of disgust at politics as usual and widespread fears of national decline. As if the end of the Vietnam War and the Watergate fiasco were not catastrophic enough, foreign-policy disasters in Africa and Asia suggested that the U.S. was losing its hegemony. The oil crisis pointed to a vast transfer of wealth and power to the Middle East, while many pundits predicted environmental catastrophe. The sharp economic downturn resulted in heavy unemployment and rising inflation. A concatenation of scandals tarnished once-trusted institutions: corporations, the military, intelligence agencies, police, and, of course, the politicians.

So disaffected was bicentennial America that it sought leaders unconnected to the establishment. In Jimmy Carter, voters found a candidate whose main qualifications were his lack of experience and connections within the Beltway or corporate worlds. Like Barack Obama, Carter claimed to rise above failed partisanship, while his New South background allowed him to symbolize racial healing. Carter, like Obama, sold himself mainly on the virtues of his character. He presented himself as a man of simple honesty, faith, and decency, and his lack of a track record allowed voters to see in him what they wanted, however far-fetched those hopes might be. If they hadn't believed it, they wouldn't have seen it with their own eyes. Above all, Carter promised change, a message that carried weight as long as its details remained non-

specific. The problem with messiahs from nowhere is that when they do exercise power, people discover to their horror what their leader's actual views and talents are. The disillusion can be dreadful.

The rhetoric and psychology of the Democratic Party in 1976 also foreshadows the present day. And as they did in 1976, Democrats now show every sign of repeating the blunders that led to a generation-long discrediting of liberalism. As the phrase goes, they have learned nothing in the intervening years, and they have forgotten nothing. And they will soon face a barrage of issues that they have neither the will nor competence to understand. Liberal triumph in 1976 led inexorably to evisceration in 1980. The same trajectory is likely to recur in the Obama years.

The key mistake Democrats made in 1976 was failing to realize what brought them to power. Democrats won because of public dissatisfaction with the previous regime, which had overseen the economic crisis, and also because of a wider fear that America would have to live with diminished expectations. But although they won on largely economic grounds, Democrats acted as if they had a sweeping mandate for cultural transformation—for social libertarianism, affirmative action and egalitarianism, dovish internationalism, and idealistic notions of human rights. These ideas dominated a radical Congress and were enthusiastically adopted by the cohort of Carter appointments to the judiciary. They all ignored a basic principle: just because people are unhappy where they

are does not mean they are willing to go anywhere you try to lead them.

In 1976, liberals were wrong on multiple counts, and all the signs point to them repeating the same mistakes. Even if Obama plays Mr. Moderate, the congressional party contains more than enough take-no-prisoners far leftists to torpedo any chance of bipartisanship or restraint. Specifically, liberals believe that the public will support radical change in three highly sensitive areas, and in each area they will overreach to the point of self-destruction. In domestic affairs, they believe the culture wars are over and that revolutionary social changes like gay marriage can now advance unchecked. They think that popular concern over environmental problems will translate into a blank check for limitless government spending and the decisive transfer of U.S. sovereignty to international agencies. And liberals are now sure that all that foolishness with international dangers and crises is firmly behind us so that we no longer need the military or intelligence capabilities developed to respond to them. As the coming three or four years will show, they are dreadfully wrong on all counts.

In the 1970s, liberal hubris manifested itself especially in domestic politics. Democrats focused obsessively on race and class, to the exclusion of culture, morals, and religion. Reading the situation in those terms allowed liberals an easy framework for explaining opposition to their policies, which must be based on overt or disguised forms of racism (and that was before they had a President Obama). If every social problem boiled down to matters of economic and racial justice, then there could be no legitimate grounds for concerns that presented themselves as cultural or religious.

That severely blinkered view goes a very long way to explaining the collapse of liberalism in 1979-80. America in the

1970s was undergoing traumatic social and moral changes, which caused widespread unhappiness and fear. Many social conservatives were alarmed that governments were using children as tools in social experimentation, an issue made most explicit in school busing. Popular opposition focused on the defense of community and local autonomy but above all on child safety. Once again, though, liberals had no valid answer to these fears, as any questioning of public education must of necessity be a disguised form of vulgar prejudice. Their response was predictable: Damn the racists, full speed ahead.

Across the board, the critical pressure points in the social politics of the 1970s involved children and young people. For the '60s generation, progress demanded removing restraints on the actions of consenting adults, whether this involved sexual experimentation, gay rights, drug use, or participation in weird and wonderful fringe religions. Who was to say that individuals should not be allowed to go to hell in their chosen way? That principle worked splendidly, unless and until people began to reflect on the effects on children. Yes, an adult could consent to engage in bizarre or self-destructive behavior, but that libertarian approach did not and could not extend to the young. Time and again, Americans have shown themselves liberal on social issues that are framed in terms of "live and let live." They draw the line when the behavior in question appears to threaten youth. Hence the most successful conservative campaigns on domestic issues of the late 1970s focused strictly on child protection, and those movements coalesced into a general concern about defending and restoring American culture.

From 1977—the pivotal year of the social-conservative revival—liberals suffered reversal after reversal, on issues of drug abuse, pornography, and gay rights. In every case, child protection gave the

key to victory. Carter administration plans to decriminalize drugs foundered on the opposition of a burgeoning parents' movement. Popular fears of threats to children defeated referenda on gay rights. Near universal nausea about the availability of child porn provoked the first serious questioning of ever expanding sexual frankness. Fears about threats against children merged easily with concerns about threats by children. The astonishing rise of violent youth crime, which reached its Himalayan peak between 1979 and 1981, was read as a symptom of a feral generation that had not been subject to appropriate family restraints or care. By the end of the 1970s, these various child-related themes drove a triumphant social conservative coalition, which included those newly galvanized religious voters mobilized in the Moral Majority.

America today has changed enormously since 1978, but many of those older issues survive in latent form and should resurface shortly. Questions of youth protection will transform the gay-marriage debate, which for most media observers has been framed in terms of social justice and equality. Presumably by judicial fiat, the practice will extend to many more states in the coming years and quite conceivably to all 50 states. This in itself will not be a popular move: recall the recent California referendum, which was decided by the blacks and Latinos who turned out to support Obama but who favored traditional family models.

How will attitudes to gay marriage evolve when people contemplate the proper age of consent in such unions? Assuming the age is to be the same as in heterosexual marriages, then adolescents of 18 will marry freely, and in many states parental consent will grant that right to boys of 16 or so. Are Americans ready to see blushing teenage male brides? And if boys of that age can marry, demands to



reduce the age of sexual consent for all youngsters will certainly follow.

The more strenuously liberals press for gay equality in matters involving youth, in marriage and adoption, the more they will generate a child-protection reaction, even among people who consider themselves socially liberal, and the more likely this reaction is to take religious forms. Following the recent California referendum, Mormons bore the brunt of liberal fury, and Catholics and other religious groups will face legal challenges for refusing to participate in gay adoptions and marriages. Other areas like abortion, contraception, and transgender surgery promise to generate many confrontations between religious believers and the current sexual revolution, and religious sensibilities can expect no sympathy from government, courts, or media. The resulting battles should re-energize a religious constituency that is currently disoriented and disillusioned. Anyone for Moral Majority II: The Sequel?

As in the 1970s, the problem of out-of-control youth could very soon be back on the political agenda. Although youth crime hasn't been on the national radar since the crack boom of the early 1990s, demographic trends confidently predict a rising storm that should break within two years or so. The crime surge of the 1970s was in large part the consequence of the baby boom reaching its most crime-prone years, as the huge cohort of those born around 1960 hit their late teens. Something very similar is about to happen again. The number of babies born in the U.S. in 1990 was only slightly smaller than the 1960 generation, and by 2010 we could be entering an alarming era of violent crime, manifested in soaring rates for homicide and robbery. Factor in the economic crisis, and American cities could look as frightening and dangerous as they did at the time of New York City's 1977 blackout, with its rioting and looting.

Making the situation still worse, the massive expansion of union membership for which many Democrats clamor will add mightily to the plethora of urban problems. Imagine cities devastated by youth crime and gang wars, while emergency workers, hospitals, buses, and garbage services are regularly on strike. If you think Americans were alienated from government in 2008, come back in two years. Liberals will try to interpret the coming crisis in terms of race and class, a problem to be solved by unlimited social spending. Conservatives had better be ready to respond with ideas of individual and family responsibility and the defense of social order.

In other ways, too, liberals utterly misread public sentiment and will build their policy upon those delusions. Americans have shown themselves open to green rhetoric and feel that policies to protect the environment are generally a good thing. Few conservatives would criticize any move in the direction of energy independence, which would be a wonderful first step toward extracting the nation from Middle Eastern quagmires. But of course, that is not what we are going to get. We will instead be facing a determined and fanatical campaign to eliminate the vastly exaggerated menace of global warming, which will mean a wholesale assault on America's energy supplies. This will translate into striking at coal- and oil-based energy while refusing to make progress toward reliance on nuclear resources, all the while seeking to curb carbon usage through onerous taxes and surcharges. Remember those Americans infuriated by strikes and intimidated by crime? They are also going to be freezing, living with rationed energy and brownouts. A grossly underpowered economy will find it all but impossible to reconstruct and revive when the coming depression ends.

As if all this isn't bad enough, expect global-warming rhetoric to be used as a

wedge to undermine national sovereignty. Under Obama, we face the virtual certainty of American accession to new treaties that go far beyond Kyoto in demanding radical cutbacks in carbon usage. The U.S. will presumably stand out as the only power attempting to enforce these standards, which would institutionalize the nation's relative decline in the face of Chinese and Indian growth. The moral and political issue of sovereignty will thus be linked to the practical daily realities of the energy crisis at home.

And then there is national security. Democrats observe, quite rightly, that Americans are uncomfortable with images of Guantanamo and waterboarding, and they are profoundly unhappy with open-ended military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. But here, too, liberals will overreach when they interpret these moral qualms as a basis for winding up American military and intelligence capabilities.

However dreadful the Carter administration may have been, however widespread the domestic discontent, what actually finished off the Democrats and opened the door for Ronald Reagan was the Iran hostage crisis. And that was a direct and predictable consequence of overreach by the administration and Congress. Since 1976, congressional liberals had led a series of campaigns against the intelligence services, exposing supposed abuses and atrocities, and in the process discrediting the whole work of intelligence. By 1977, massive purges had removed many of the CIA's best agents, while congressional restrictions made it all but impossible for the agency to pursue its work. In the Middle East and elsewhere, America was flying blind.

Underlying these bizarre actions was a theory of human rights that assumed the whole world could and should operate according to Western theories of democratic liberalism. Unfortunately, it didn't. In Iran, the shah was an unsavory



dictator with a heavy-handed secret police, but he exercised his powers to pursue a pro-American policy. Under the Carter regime, the U.S. ended its support of the shah, while ceasing to pay off the truly dangerous radical Islamists who would eventually replace him. American efforts at self-immolation succeeded in 1979, with the Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis that destroyed the Carter administration.

Surely congressional liberals are not stupid enough to do anything like that again? Don't believe it. By the end of 2009, expect a purge of U.S. intelligence agencies, as well as suffocating new constraints on intelligence-gathering capacities. These moves will probably be accompanied by a series of congressional hearings, which will provide maximum opportunities for showboating by politicians, while embarrassing the CIA. A blinded and disarmed Obama administration will then blunder anew into confrontations that will once again plumb the depths of national humiliation—if not in Iran, then in Taiwan, Ukraine, Venezuela, or Pakistan. If we're very unlucky, airliners will again be crashing into our skyscrapers and cargo ships will be exploding in our ports. And as in the late 1970s, there will be plenty of discharged and disaffected former intelligence agents wandering the corridors of power, serving as endless sources of leaks and disinformation against the Obama regime. Expect the worst age of political scandal since, well, the 1970s.

All analogies limp, and no one is suggesting a straight replay of the Carter years, still less that some kind of new Reagan era is its inevitable sequel. But if liberals seem so determined to repeat the mistakes of that era, then we have at least a plausible sketch of the coming Obama administration—of its rise and ruin. ■

*Philip Jenkins the author, most recently, of The Lost History of Christianity.*

If the Status of Forces Agreement between Iraq and the United States is not further modified or rejected by referendum, it will require a pullout of U.S. forces from Iraq by 2011. For those like Sen. John McCain who have been arguing that the U.S. must continue to be in Iraq for strategic reasons and to combat terrorism, the departure of American forces would mean that the loss of thousands of U.S. lives and trillions of dollars had been completely pointless. Washington will have no say in what occurs in Baghdad and will have to rely on the Iraqis to deal with whatever terrorists remain. It will quickly become clear, if it has not already, that the chief beneficiaries of removing Saddam Hussein are the Iranians.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates might believe that he has three years to prepare for the departure of American forces, but the intelligence community, based on its own assessments, has adopted a somewhat different view. It believes that the Iraqi political support for any continued U.S. presence in the country is paper thin and that there could easily be developments that would dramatically accelerate the timetable. Possibilities include sectarian rioting and a move by the Kurdish region to declare independence, leading to something like a civil war over oil-rich Kirkuk. The United States would be caught in the middle.

Aware that the new administration in Washington will demand reliable information on Iraq even if the American presence is drastically scaled down or even eliminated, the intelligence community has given high priority to establishing special programs to insure that data continues to flow. Due to several poorly executed recruitment attempts, the Iraqis have already noted that U.S. intelligence is accelerating its efforts to establish a stable of agents, officials, and military officers in key positions who are willing to provide information even if the U.S. presence is dramatically reduced. Senior CIA officers with experience in the highly specialized intelligence operations, referred to as "stay behinds," have been transferred into the Baghdad embassy to provide their expertise.

Stay behinds are agents recruited in advance to report on developments when there is a reasonable expectation that normal embassy operations will be restricted or heavily monitored. Environments where normal intelligence activity is particularly difficult are referred to as "denied areas," an indication that the host country is essentially hostile, like the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The last major CIA denied area, stay-behind operation was in Hong Kong in preparation for the takeover by China in 1997. Such operations rely on sophisticated communications by means of satellites, dead drops, and postal-accommodation addresses in third countries to provide channels for the continued receipt of vital information. The Iraqis will attempt to frustrate the U.S. intelligence effort by providing double agents who ostensibly allow themselves to be recruited by the Americans but who will actually be controlled by Baghdad.

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a fellow at the American Conservative Defense Alliance.*

# Mom, Apple Pie, and Hyundai?

The auto industry has been a bulwark of the American middle class. If Wall Street warrants a bailout, why not Detroit?

By Pat Choate

IN THOSE HAPPY DAYS of the 1950s, my friends and I anxiously awaited the moment when the local auto dealers began displaying their new car models. My uncle was a Chrysler-Plymouth dealer, and we always began our tours there. Then we would go from one showroom to another, collecting the brochures, sitting behind the wheels of the new Corvettes, Chrysler 300s, Plymouth Sport Furies, and Thunderbirds, opening the hoods and admiring the powerful engines. Rare was the teenager of that era who did not know the specifications of virtually every model produced by General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler.

“Car people” such as Lee Iacocca, then at Ford, were in charge of America’s Big Three automakers. They loved their cars as much as their customers did. The carmakers and their suppliers produced an ever changing set of engines, transmissions, accessories, and gadgets that made buying a car a family treat unlike any other. So many different types of hubcaps were produced that there were hubcap stores in all the major cities. In Texas, stealing them was a state pastime for teenaged boys.

The differentiated line of cars produced by General Motors was also a measure of social and economic status. A Chevrolet was for those starting out. A Cadillac was for those who had arrived. Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, and Buicks were stop-offs for those on the way up or down. A jump from a Chevrolet to a Buick was an event noticed and com-

mented upon by neighbors as a measure of success—or of someone acting above himself.

In that postwar period, Americans were on the go, and though Charlie Wilson was ridiculed for commenting, “What’s good for General Motors is good for America,” he was right. The Great Depression and World War II were memories, people had well-paying jobs, credit was easy, and a new car could be bought with a small downpayment. GM and the auto industry were a major part of the economy and an important contributor to that prosperity.

The Big Three autos, coupled with the construction of the 42,500 mile Interstate Highway System and the establishment of a vast network of safe and inexpensive motels such as Holiday Inns, opened the continent for inexpensive family vacations. Dinah Shore’s perky signature song captures the essence of America’s love affair with its cars: “See the USA in your Chevrolet. America is asking you to call. America is the greatest land of all.”

But success bred complacency and hubris in the industry. By the mid-1960s and early 1970s, management of the Big Three had shifted from the car people to “numbers guys,” who were more interested in squeezing every possible penny of profit from the vehicles. To avoid costly worker strikes, Big Three management made major concessions to labor on pensions, healthcare, and vacations, costs it then passed on to consumers. Meanwhile, quality slipped. Designs were unimaginative. Buyers

would ask whether a car was produced on a Monday or Friday, fearing that either the workers were too exhausted and hungover after the weekends to do a good job or too anxious to leave on Friday to care.

By the late 1960s, the Big Three had become an easy target for Japanese and European competitors. In 1980, Chrysler faced bankruptcy, and General Motors’ management seriously considered exiting the auto business altogether. As part of that strategy, GM bought Hughes Electronics and Ross Perot’s EDS.

Perot and the GM management quickly soured on each other. He wanted to manufacture the best cars in the world, and they wanted to enter into businesses in which they were inexperienced. One of the more interesting business lectures captured by the Harvard Business School in its case studies is Perot’s speech to the GM board on the day he concluded his sale of stock back to the company. He ticked off what he thought was wrong with GM and what it needed to do assure its prosperity in the auto industry. The essence of his message was to treat workers well, be innovative, settle for nothing less than making the best cars in the world, and sell them at the lowest possible price. His advice was ignored, of course, and GM continued to lose position in its domestic market.

Eventually, GM, Ford, and Chrysler’s plodding efforts to build better vehicles began to pay off in the early and mid-1990s. Quality improved, styling began to

matter once again, and the Big Three produced the kinds of vehicles Americans wanted—big, comfortable, powerful, and safe. Easy credit and cheap gas made owning the behemoths inexpensive, and Detroit seized control of the market for full-size pickups, vans, and SUVs.

A key moment for the Big Three and UAW came after their signing of the 1996 labor contract. GM thought it had bought three years of labor peace. But the union unexpectedly staged a series of local strikes in facilities that produced strategic parts, the shortage of which could stop all GM production. These snap strikes closed GM for part of 1997 and cost the company billions of dollars. For whatever advantage the union may have gotten, its actions enraged GM management, which accelerated its investment in duplicative plants in other parts of the world, staffed with nonunion workers.

In 1999, GM spun Delphi, its parts division, into a new corporation that entered Chapter 11 reorganization in 2005. The UAW contract was broken, and the workers were left with \$14 per

its interest to Cerberus, a private investment fund.

It is difficult to teach an elephant to waltz, but it can be done. While the Big Three have been slow to change, they have adapted well enough that they still hold half the U.S. market share. It is an amazing turnaround.

Consider quality. In 2007, Ford won 102 quality awards, including AutoPacific's Best in Class for three models and Germany's largest auto magazine's Auto 1 of Europe Award for its S-MAX. *Forbes* awarded the 2008 Chrysler 300 "the highest-quality car in the near-luxury category" over the Audi A4, BMW 3 Series, Lexus IS, and Mercedes-Benz C Class. Of the 15 global finalists for the 2008 Motor Trend Car of the Year Award, the Big Three manufactured nine, the Japanese four, and the Europeans two. The 2008 winner was GM's Cadillac CTS, which *Motor Trend* described as "proof that Detroit can still build a world-class sedan."

As for innovation, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler invest almost \$12 billion annually on R&D, making them a

vehicles, mostly motor and battery innovation; and emerging related technologies, including solar, wind, and other green inventions.

GM has higher average quality and newer green technology and patents than the other 14 auto manufacturers combined. Together with Ford it holds approximately one-third of all green-technology patents and the related value. Moreover, GM has 70 percent of the patents in the emerging-technology category. This domestic share increases to 85 percent if Ford is added. Finally, Ford owns 30 percent of all patents with a similar related-value measure in emission-control innovation. These Big Three technologies have great potential for stimulating overall U.S. economic and job growth and creating a greener and more fuel-efficient world.

There is much of value to be saved in this vital industry, but relief has been slow in coming. When Wall Street recklessly gambled with borrowed monies and lost, federal aid was characterized as a "bailout." The present auto crisis was created by powerful economic forces, many beyond Detroit's control. Federal efforts to save the U.S. auto industry would constitute a "rescue."

The primary causes of the current U.S. auto-industry crisis are threefold: a financial freeze in which even well-qualified borrowers are denied credit to buy vehicles; fluctuating oil prices that have driven the price of gasoline from less than \$2 per gallon to more than \$4 and then back to \$2, all in less than 10 months; and a consumer panic that has cut retail sales to 15-year lows.

The failure of the U.S. Treasury Department and Securities and Exchange Commission to monitor, let alone regulate, Wall Street has created today's financial wreckage and the resulting consumer panic. And despite the obvious need for a far-sighted energy policy, the last four presidents and Congress

**WHILE THE BIG THREE HAVE BEEN SLOW TO CHANGE, THEY HAVE ADAPTED WELL ENOUGH THAT THEY STILL HOLD HALF THE U.S. MARKET SHARE. IT IS AN AMAZING TURNAROUND.**

hour jobs, no healthcare, and no defined-benefit pensions. President Lyndon Johnson was once asked if half a loaf of bread was better than none. He replied, "A slice is better than none." The Delphi workers got a slice.

Over the past two decades, each of the Big Three has been through extensive management changes, downsizing, and layoffs. Chrysler even became part of the German company Daimler, which could not make the acquisition profitable and eventually sold 80 percent of

major source of technology development. In 2007, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granted these three corporations 1,030 patents.

James E. Malackowski, CEO of Ocean Tomo LLC, a merchant bank that specializes in intellectual property products and services, recently compared four of the green, clean, and energy efficient patent portfolios held by the Top 15 global automakers—emission control, catalytic converters, and related chemistry; fuel cells; hybrid/electric



have done little but encourage more drilling.

The longer-term inability of America's auto industry to export competitive products has its origins in U.S. trade policies that accept closed foreign auto markets and the payments of massive export rebates by other governments to their automakers. How can U.S. automakers be expected to compete in a world where German producers get a 19 percent export subsidy on every vehicle sold in the United States, China undervalues its currency by up to 50 percent, Japan keeps its auto market tightly closed, and the U.S. government allows South Korean automakers to sell more than 700,000 subsidized vehicles in this market annually, but tolerates Korea's restriction of U.S. imports so tightly that fewer than 7,000 American-made vehicles are sold there each year? The Big Three and the UAW are not at fault for these distortions of competition.

The three overarching questions that President-elect Obama and the 111th Congress face are: what will happen if the Big Three are not saved, how much will it cost, and what is the best way to execute the rescue?

## A 100 PERCENT CLOSEDOWN OF THE BIG THREE AUTO PRODUCERS WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ALMOST 3 MILLION U.S. JOBS IN THE FIRST YEAR.

As to the first question, federal inaction would be costly and destructive in ways America has not experienced since the Great Depression. The Center for Automotive Research—appropriately, CAR—projects that a 100 percent closedown of the Big Three auto producers would result in the loss of almost 3 million U.S. jobs in the first year. The majority of those losses would be Main Street jobs distributed across the country that depend on spending by the Big Three—steel, glass, and rubber produc-

## Employment Impact of a 100 Percent Close of Big Three

(Rounded to nearest thousand)

	2009	2010	2011
<b>Direct Employment</b> (Big Three)	-239,000	-239,000	-206,000
<b>Indirect Employment</b> (Suppliers)	-974,000	-795,000	-545,000
<b>Spinoff Employment</b> (General Economy)	-1,738,000	-1,427,000	-1,021,000
<b>Total Employment</b>	-2,951,000	-2,462,000	-1,772,000

Source: "Car Research Memorandum: The Impact on the U.S. Economy of a Major Contraction of the Detroit Three Automakers," Center for Automotive Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Nov. 4, 2008.

ers and the 20,000 dealers, who are major purchasers of advertising in local newspapers, radio, television, and other small business services provided by lawyers, accountants, real estate contractors, and landscapers.

A 50 percent reduction in the Big Three's operations would be almost as costly. CAR estimates that 2.47 million jobs would be lost in the first year, 1.5 would still be unfilled in year two, and slightly more than 1 million in year three. The lost revenues from either scenario would devastate federal, state, and local budgets, creating further economic

tanks, airplanes, and other war materiel as happened in World Wars I and II. The foreign auto transplants are not a substitute, for they are mostly facilities for putting together kits manufactured abroad.

As for the cost of the auto rescue, it is impossible to estimate the final number. Certainly, \$38 billion for an operational bridge loan is too little and will require supplements. GM alone has a cash-burn rate of \$2 billion per month, and will use its portion of the first loans within months. Yet the earliest that GM says that it can produce its new line of vehicles is 2010. Inevitably, the automakers will be back for more, much like the banks and insurance companies.

As CAR has documented, however, the costs of inaction will also be great. Its estimates of a collapse, moreover, do not include the costs of shifting more than \$100 billion of Big Three pension liabilities to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, which is currently operating with a \$10 billion deficit. Only about a quarter to a third of the Obama administration's proposed stimulus of massive investment infrastructure expenditures will be felt in 2009, half in 2010, and the remainder thereafter. As presently defined, it will have little effect on the Big Three.

They need more sales now. The fastest and surest way to stimulate such activity is for the federal government to give a massive one-to-three-year tax deduction for sales of U.S. vehicles with a high U.S. or North American content, such as 70 percent. This would help clear the dealer backlog and immediately put people to work. It also would allow taxpayers to get great bargains on new vehicles.

Some have suggested that Chapter 11 is the only viable option for the Big Three. But it would create an economic avalanche in which dozens, if not hundreds, of suppliers and dealers would be forced into bankruptcy. No institution other than the federal government is now able to provide the billions of dollars necessary for the industry to operate during reorganization. And at the very moment that these auto giants need to act quickly and be flexible, they would be constrained by a federal judge and trustees to get approval for even the most basic decisions. Those who advocate bankruptcy need only look at the cumbersome and costly Delphi experience, which is now in its fourth year.

But rescuing the American auto industry will require more than vast sums of public monies. Basic policy changes in trade and tax laws are essential. One of the most difficult, but unavoidable, challenges will be to end the Value Added Tax discrimination faced by the Big Three in both their domestic and foreign markets. Soon after World War II ended, U.S. trade negotiators agreed to allow the rebate of Value Added Taxes on their exports and the imposition of VAT equivalents on their imports of U.S. goods and services. Europe was rebuilt decades ago, but 153 nations now have a VAT, and its average rate is 15.5 percent. Japan has a 5 percent VAT, China's is 17 percent, Germany's is 19 percent, and France imposes 19.6 percent. The economic

consequences to the Big Three and other U.S.-based manufacturers have been devastating.

When a German automaker exports a vehicle into the U.S. that costs \$50,000, for instance, it receives from the German government a 19 percent VAT export rebate, worth about \$9,500. But when one of the Big Three exports a \$50,000 vehicle to Germany, it must pay the German government a 19 percent, \$9,500 VAT-equivalent tax at the dock. Thus the Big Three products are price disadvantaged in both markets. Moreover, these discriminatory VAT rules provide a powerful incentive to outsource production from the United States. In the Tokyo, Uruguay, and Doha trade negotiations, the U.S. Congress

tures, plus long-term warrants, whose purchase price is set at today's stock values. After all, we are taking the risk. When any public loans are repaid, the terms and conditions should require a sale of those stocks, hopefully at a substantial public profit. Taxpayers made almost a 30 percent profit on the Chrysler loans three decades ago.

Second, demands for a reduction in worker pay should be eschewed. The UAW and its members have already made massive wage and benefit concessions in recent negotiations. Delphi is only one example. Almost a century ago, Henry Ford paid his workers a then unheard of \$5 per day so they could buy the products they were making, and the

**INDIA IMPOSES A 100 PERCENT TARIFF ON IMPORTED U.S. VEHICLES. CHINA'S TARIFF RATE IS 25 PERCENT. KOREA HAS LONG-RUN NATIONAL ANTI-IMPORT CAMPAIGNS THAT INCLUDE TARGETING FOR TAX AUDITS ANYONE WHO BUYS A FOREIGN CAR.**

instructed American trade negotiators to eliminate this tax disadvantage, but other governments refused to discuss the issue.

In addition to pressing for the adoption of new global trade rules to end VAT discrimination against U.S. manufacturers, the incoming administration should focus on eliminating the many protectionist national tariff and non-tariff trade barriers crippling the Big Three. India, for example, imposes a 100 percent tariff on imported U.S. vehicles. China's tariff rate is 25 percent. Korea has long-run national anti-import campaigns that include targeting for tax audits anyone who buys a foreign car. Unless foreign economic protectionism is confronted immediately and at the highest levels of the U.S. government, the American auto industry cannot survive.

Three other principles are essential to the rescue. First, taxpayers should receive substantial equity in these ven-

auto industry led the way in creating an American middle class. This rescue should not undermine broader efforts to provide secure jobs and benefits, nor should it allow the pitting of well-paid American workers against the penny-wage labor of other countries.

Without question, the UAW has often been smug, arrogant, and inflexible. But rather than punishing it by requiring reduction in its members' pay, we should expect the union to contribute to the rescue. It should enter into a no-strike agreement until the federal loans are paid and invest its \$1 billion "rainy day" reserve, commonly called its "strike fund," in the preferred stock of the Big Three until the loans are satisfied. The rainy day has come, and if taxpayers are putting up money to save UAW jobs, so should the union.

While U.S. antitrust laws allowed the UAW to target one company at a time,

those same laws prevented the Big Three from negotiating together on an industry-wide contract. Any rescue should permit the Big Three and UAW to negotiate an industry wage and benefit package.

Third, executive pay at the Big Three should be capped at some simple multiple of the average annual pay of Big Three workers, such as 10 or 15 to 1, with any bonuses being provided in corporate stock, at least until any federal loans are paid off. Also, the Big Three executive pension funds should be required to have at least a majority of its capital invested in Big Three stock. The goal, of course, is to create a common incentive for labor and management to work together.

As of mid-November 2008, the U.S. Treasury and the Federal Reserve had advanced \$2 trillion to salvage the financial wreck created by Wall Street. In late November, the FDIC announced that it was ready to loan another \$1.4 trillion to stabilize the banks. The Bush administration and Congress seem to have no limits to their concern about Wall Street.

The Big Three automakers, their suppliers, and dealers are on Main Street. They employ millions of workers and provide essential goods for American consumers. If the Big Three fail, an economic tsunami will quickly roll across the United States, destroying jobs, incomes, and national confidence at historic levels. The challenges faced by the new administration at that point would be similar not to those faced by Franklin Roosevelt, but to those that confronted Herbert Hoover in the first years of the Great Depression.

In this instance, what is good for General Motors is good for America. ■

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## A Surge of Skepticism

What failed in Iraq won't prevail in Afghanistan.

By William S. Lind

WAR IS THE MOST COMPLEX of all man's activities, calling forth his full physical, mental, and moral powers. This renders determining cause and effect challenging. Did the North win the Civil War because of better generalship? J.F.C. Fuller argues that it did: Lincoln found two good generals, Grant and Sherman, while the South had only one, Lee. Or was it the "Anaconda strategy," including the Union's blockade of the Confederacy, that doomed a largely agrarian power? Or was it the North's moral appeal to abolitionists in Britain and France, which prevented those countries from intervening on behalf of the South? The debates will go on forever, or at least until the Confederacy finally wins.

The challenge is compounded when an interest—an ideology or political party or military bureaucracy or defense industry, to name the most common—deliberately distorts history to "prove" a cause-and-effect relationship from which it benefits. Exhibit A is "winning through air power," also known as strategic bombing, the founding myth of the U.S. Air Force. Despite the conclusion of the Strategic Bombing Survey immediately after World War II that the bombing of Germany was largely a failure, the Air Force has continued to argue that air power used simply for bombardment can win wars. (When aviation has been integrated with the

maneuvering of ground forces, it has sometimes proved decisive.) The result has been another failure of strategic bombing in Korea, failure yet again in Vietnam, a recent failure in Kosovo, and an ongoing failure in Afghanistan. For the Afghans, the latest version of Russian roulette is celebrating a wedding.

The most portentous case of misunderstanding military cause and effect in America's current wars revolves around the "surge." As so often, the misunderstanding is promoted and extended by interests with axes to grind, in this case the Bush administration and the neo-cons. Their propaganda has been sufficiently extensive that most Americans now believe the relative quiet in Iraq is a result of our surging thousands more American troops into that unhappy country.

Worse, among those falling for this *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy we must apparently include the arriving Obama administration. During the campaign, Barack Obama repeatedly called for shifting American troops from Iraq to Afghanistan to create a new surge in another failing war. Any hopes that this was merely campaign rhetoric, designed to quell charges that Obama was "weak on defense" compared to McCain, seem unfounded. The Nov. 11 *Washington Post* reported on its front page, "Obama also intends to move ahead with a planned deployment of thousands of



additional U.S. troops” to Afghanistan.

It may already be too late to prevent this blunder. Far from “change we can believe in,” Obama’s victory merely involves replacing one set of establishment players with another. Throughout Washington, the Clintonistas are measuring for new drapes. These are the same wonderful people who gave us the war with Serbia, among other strategic idiocies.

Nonetheless, it is worth understanding what really happened in Iraq. It appears the reduction of violence, which is likely to prove temporary, had four causes. The surge was the least important.

The most critical was al-Qaeda’s alienation of much of its Sunni base, a consequence of its attempt to impose a puritanical version of Islam before it had consolidated its power. This is a common error of revolutionary movements. The smart ones back off and adopt a “broad front” strategy until the war is won, at which point they cut their moderate allies’ throats.

The al-Qaeda model of Fourth Generation, non-state war may have an inherent and fatal disability in this regard. “Tom Ricks’s Inbox” in the Oct. 19 *Washington Post* offers some intriguing evidence. Ricks wrote:

Where did al-Qaeda in Iraq go wrong? In a paper prepared for the recent annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, the Australian political scientist Andrew Phillips argues persuasively that, by their nature, al-Qaeda affiliates tend to alienate their hosts ...

Ricks then quotes Phillips at length:

In successive conflicts ranging from Bosnia to Chechnya to Kashmir, the jihad jet-set has rapidly worn out its welcome among local

host populations as a result of its ideological inflexibility and high-handedness, as well as its readiness to resort to indiscriminate violence against locals at the first signs of challenge. ... That this pattern has so frequently been repeated suggests that the underlying causes of Al Qaeda’s defeat in Iraq may transcend the specific circumstances of that conflict. Badly stated, the causes of Al Qaeda’s defeat in Iraq can be located in its ideological DNA.

In my view, the DNA to which Phillips refers is the type of people drawn to al-Qaeda and other Fourth Generation entities. They are mostly religious fanatics of the most extreme varieties, similar to the Levellers and Diggers in the Eng-

## U.S. SUPPORT FOR SUNNI FORCES MADE AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE IN SECURITY IN IRAQ. AL-QAEDA NOT ONLY LOST ITS BASE—FATAL FOR ANY POLITICAL MOVEMENT—THEY FOUND THEIR FORMER SUPPORTERS HAD BECOME HOSTILE.

lish Civil War. Regardless of what their organization’s leadership may enjoin, they will treat any locals they regard as lax with severity. They cannot do otherwise without becoming “impure” themselves. It is useful to remind ourselves why the Puritans were called Puritans—and perhaps also to remember the favorite phrase of Capt. Raphael Semmes of the *C.S.S. Alabama*: “the cockatrice’s egg that hatched forth the Puritan...”

If this diagnosis is valid, it offers hope to those who have to fight al-Qaeda and some counsel as well: don’t brutalize the population so much that al-Qaeda looks good by comparison.

That brings us to the second cause of the improved situation in Iraq. U.S. forces stopped attacking the Iraqi

Sunnis and started paying them instead. This crucially important change in American policy appears to have begun with the U.S. Marines in Anbar province. The Marine Corps underwent something of an intellectual renaissance in the 1980s and early 1990s, the core of which was a realization that ideas are important in war. Many of the Corps’s leaders in Anbar were part of that awakening. When they saw the results of a policy of hostility toward the local population—more war—they changed course. When Gen. David Petraeus arrived in Iraq, he adopted the new Anbar policy countrywide.

With the Americans no longer attacking them, Iraq’s Sunnis were able to turn on their al-Qaeda tormentors, whose practices included shooting in the face any Iraqi they saw smoking. American

forces aided the Sunnis with money, enabling them to form and sustain anti-al-Qaeda militias that eventually numbered almost 100,000 men. That rewarding effort is now fading because the Sunni militias have been placed under the control of the Shi’ite Iraqi government, which loathes and fears them and is not paying them regularly. But while it lasted, U.S. support for Sunni forces made an enormous difference in security in Iraq. Al-Qaeda not only lost its base—fatal for any political movement—they found their former supporters had become hostile.

The third cause of Iraq’s temporarily improved stability was General Petraeus’s order to the U.S. Army to move out of fortified bases and into the cities where it could provide security to

the population. Troops sitting in Fort Zinderneuf may be safe, but they cannot make anyone else secure. All they can do is periodic raids, which quickly make them enemies of the local population; few people enjoy having their doors kicked in at 3 a.m. Billeting the troops among the population to defend them and ensure local order may be Guerrilla War 101, but it worked.

The last and least important reason for the betterment in Iraq was the surge. It made a few thousand more troops available to move into Iraqi cities, but most of the troops for the all important change in U.S. policy were already in Iraq. Without the change in policy, the additional forces would have accomplished nothing.

## **OUR STRATEGY IS HOPELESSLY WRONG. IT AIMS AT COMPLETE MILITARY DEFEAT OF THE TALIBAN TO SECURE THE VICHY KARZAI GOVERNMENT, WHICH REQUIRES MAGICALLY MAKING IT LEGITIMATE.**

Here we see the real lesson of the surge. Adding more American troops to a losing war just guarantees a bigger and more obvious defeat. If the Obama administration is to have any hope of avoiding a loss in Afghanistan, it must first change American policies there. As was true for far too long in Iraq, we are attacking the locals, not defending them. Our outdated infantry tactics rely on calling in massive firepower, usually in the form of airstrikes. Most of the victims are civilians. Our troops seek “force protection” by staying in base camps from which they launch patrols, rather than living in the villages and towns to protect the people.

Most important, our strategy is hopelessly wrong. It aims at complete military defeat of the Taliban and securing of the Vichy Karzai government, which requires magically making it legitimate.

Those strategic objectives are unattainable no matter what we do on the ground.

There may be a glimmer of hope. The same *Washington Post* story that confirmed Obama’s plans to surge thousands more American troops into Afghanistan also reported, “The incoming Obama administration ... looks favorably on the nascent dialogue between the Afghan government and ‘reconcilable’ elements of the Taliban, according to Obama national security advisors.”

This is a baby step, insufficient in itself. A few Taliban elements may “reconcile” with the imposed Karzai regime, but not enough to make a difference. But Saudi Arabia has been sponsoring

own great relief, perhaps to be replaced by a restored monarchy. The monarchy was popular in Afghanistan and would be accepted by most Afghans as a legitimate government. The Taliban might even put an end to the opium trade, as it did the last time it was in power.

Pipe dreams of a democratic, secular, modern Afghanistan with “rights for women” would vanish, as pipe dreams always do, but we should be wise enough to let them go. Afghanistan would become Afghanistan again, which is all it can ever be.

*Washington Times* columnist Benjamin P. Tyree recently quoted Ronald Reagan’s secretary of state George Shultz as saying, “We should think much more carefully about putting more troops there. We succeeded pretty well initially in 2001. Why? Because we made common cause with various tribes for whom the only common theme is the expulsion of foreigners.”

The rumor mill says that President Obama may choose former president Bill Clinton as his mediator between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That would be a good move. Why not similarly make George Shultz the new administration’s point man for Afghanistan? He seems to understand that surges are not the answer. The “war forever” crowd on the neocon Right would have trouble calling Reagan’s secretary of state a terrorist. Any power-sharing arrangement he blessed would sail through Congress. Besides, Obama has promised to employ some Republicans. Who better than one of Ronald Reagan’s right-hand men?

There are better ways out of Afghanistan than getting in deeper. Regrettably, the foxfire light of hubris often renders realistic roads invisible. ■

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# Back in the U.S.S.A.

BARACK OBAMA and George W. Bush seem to have come away from their study of the Great Depression with similar conclusions.

To wit: after the Crash of 1929, the Federal Reserve did not move fast enough to save the banks and inject cash into the economy. Second, the New Deal, far from being wastrel deficit spending, was not bold enough. So it was that America wallowed in depression for a decade until the unbridled spending and mammoth deficits of World War II pulled us out.

Bush and Obama seem determined not to make the same mistake. We are all Keynesians now.

Thus we have the \$700 billion Bush bank bailout, the \$700 billion “stimulus package” Obama wants by inauguration to “jolt this economy back into shape,” and the \$800 billion fund Hank Paulson created to get consumers borrowing and buying again.

These come on top of Bush’s \$455 billion deficit, the \$29 billion bailout of Bear Stearns, the \$105 billion in pork to grease the \$700 billion bailout, the \$100 to \$200 billion to keep Fannie and Freddie afloat, the \$140 billion and counting for AIG, the \$25 billion for the greening of GM, Ford, and Chrysler, the \$25 billion more to save the Big Three, and the \$20 billion for CitiGroup.

Now much of this overlaps and some will be retrieved. But we are still staring at a deficit that could approach \$2 trillion. How would this stack up historically?

A deficit of \$1.4 trillion would be 10 percent of gross domestic product, dwarfing the postwar record 6 percent run by Ronald Reagan in the Jimmy Carter recession.

Bewailing the “Reagan deficits” has been a staple of Democratic oratory.

This will stop. But the politics is not the point, the policy is.

Consider what we are about to do. Bush in 2008 spent 21 percent of GDP. States, counties, and cities spent another 12 percent. One third of GDP is therefore spent by government at all levels. Obama and Co. propose to raise that by another 10 percent of GDP. We may soon be north of 40 percent of gross domestic product controlled and spent by government.

That is Eurosoci-alism. And where exactly are we going to get the money?

Americans save nothing. We spend more than we earn: thus the levels of consumer debt, credit-card debt, auto debt, and mortgage debt. U.S. foreign-exchange reserves amount to a piddling \$73 billion.

The only nation with the kind of cash on hand we need now—if we don’t print the money and invite another gigantic bubble—is China, with its \$2 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves.

Will Beijing lend back the dollars it has piled up? China certainly has an incentive to keep Americans spending. For our purchases of Chinese-made goods have often been responsible for 100 percent of China’s growth. China does not want to kill the American goose that lays those golden eggs—until the goose can’t lay any more eggs. Then they won’t need the goose.

But should China decide to lend us the money, what will Beijing demand in interest rates and assurances that we will not default? After all, the U.S. debt is 70 percent of GDP, our savings rate is near zero, and our merchandise trade deficit is still running at 5 percent to 6 percent of GDP.

Unlike the 1950s, we are today dependent on foreigners for two-thirds

of our oil and for much of our manufactured goods—toys, TVs, radios, cameras, cars, shoes, clothes, bikes, motorcycles—and for the \$700 billion to \$800 billion we borrow each year to pay for these imports.

With U.S. homeowners, consumers, companies, and banks now going bust, why must the nation borrow trillions more to bail them out? So we can maintain our status and standard of living as the last superpower.

Bush and Obama are competing to shovel out trillions of dollars, so we can return to the good times of yesterday.

But wasn’t yesterday the root cause of today? Didn’t saving nothing and spending more than we earn, purchasing what we cannot afford in cars, consumer goods, and houses, buying far more from abroad than we sell abroad—didn’t that cause this crisis and crash?

A family man in America’s condition, awash in debt, spending more than he makes, would cut back consumption, find a second job, and get out of debt. Or declare bankruptcy, accept the shame and humiliation, change his ways, and start anew. Is it different for a nation?

Yet we seem to believe we can borrow and spend our way out of a swamp of unpayable debt into which borrowing and spending have plunged us.

We are headed either for default on our debts and bankruptcy as a nation or something less honorable: a quiet cheapening of the debts we have incurred by inflating and destroying the dollar, robbing our creditors of what we owe them and robbing our own people of the value of what they have earned. And so it has come to this.

What would the Founding Fathers think of us now? ■



# American Omen

Garet Garrett knew where FDR's policies—and Bush's—would lead.

By Justin Raimondo

IN AN AMERICA in which a Republican administration has nationalized the financial sector and both Left and Right call on the government to save them, the authentic conservative is a stranger in his own country. The old signposts are missing, and he travels on roads he's never seen.

Conservatives looking for direction, for some clue as to how to get out of their present conundrum had best look to where they've been. One who has traveled that way before can tell them what lies ahead and how best to face it. In the case of the road we are now traveling, there was a wayfarer who knew this trail by heart: his name was Garet Garrett.

One of the first financial journalists in the country, a writer of nonfiction and sometime novelist, a polemicist and prose stylist without equal, Garrett was born on a farm in the Midwest in 1878, the year Edison patented the gramophone. Apprenticed at 16 to a printer, he fell into the business of journalism and made his way to the big cities, winding up in New York. There he joined the staff of Adolph Ochs's *New York Times*, where he served on the editorial board. He specialized in business and became the chronicler of the Roaring Twenties. In the heyday of untrammelled individualism and capitalism untamed, he was the chief celebrant of the New Era of prosperity and seemingly unlimited economic ascent. Later he became the historian of its betrayal and decline at the hands of its own defenders.

The stock market Crash of 1929 augured the end of the world he had known and the beginning of something new in American history: what Garrett called "a revolution within the form." Reading of his agony at the victory of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a chill of déjà vu crawls up the spine of today's conservative: "Our fighting base is gone. Formerly we could say the people had voted for the New Deal. Now they have voted for it in a positive, overwhelming manner. Then what? ... Where is the new base? I don't see it. Where is the fighting position? I haven't any. No one else seems to have one. Hearst and [Al] Smith and Rockefeller embrace it. The Republicans are saying they must reorganize the party on a liberal platform."

Garrett, then at the height of his journalistic prominence and influence as chief editorial writer for the *Saturday Evening Post*—America's premier weekly magazine—reached the nadir of despair. The Republicans had come to him for advice, but as Garrett said of the hapless Alf Landon, "it is like dropping it down a well. There is no splash."

Recalling "a dreary weekend with Hoover," Garrett advised the president to rein in spending, adjust to the new price structure, and refrain from keeping wages high. Hoover acted instead on his belief that high wages, rather than greater productivity, create prosperity. Confusing cause and effect, Hoover sought to cajole and intimidate business into maintaining the bubble rather than liquidating malinvestment and redirecting capital to productive uses.

The response of the Bush administration to the economic meltdown is eerily similar to Hoover's, which was not a program of laissez faire as popularly misconceived but a program of reflation. Hoover not only instituted public works, but also introduced measures to prop up real estate prices and give subsidies, in the form of "loans," to failing businesses.

Some were adjusting to the new reality in spite of the New Deal's best efforts, and Garrett publicized their lonely struggle in a series on entrepreneurs bucking the tide: "In nearly every community," he reported, "no matter how deeply it may be sunk in depression, you will find a plant working night and day to fill orders." Giving us new perspective on the phrase "too big to fail," Garrett wrote that the owners were mostly small businessmen, the sort "whose attack upon adversity has carried [them] into some new ground of opportunity."

As the Depression swept away the illusion of prosperity, Garrett could feel the craving for a savior blowing like an ill wind, a premonition of the collectivism that filled the streets of Europe's cities with men in colored shirts—black, red, and brown. As Obama-worship sweeps the land and the media swoons over his every utterance, it seems like Garrett caught a glimpse of our world torn out of time. He saw "People wishing for some power to descend upon them from above and make everything right by edict ... the right thing must be done. How can people themselves think what the right magic is? How could they

perform it if they could think of it? Therefore, let the Government think of it and do it."

This wasn't what the people had voted for. Roosevelt campaigned against deficits, vowed to cut spending and gut bureaucracy. He criticized the Republicans for being spendthrifts. When he got into office, however, he unleashed the infamous "Hundred Days," which was Hooverism on steroids. At the end of it, Garrett and the *Post* brought out the heavy artillery and commenced firing: "The country," he declared, had "embraced a dictatorship, with no conscious intention, no serious debate about it, by implied consent."

The candidate who had campaigned for a "sound dollar" seized the nation's gold in the name of national emergency and repudiated the pledge printed on every dollar until that fateful moment: "Redeemable in gold on demand." Thus was government freed from all constraints, as the phrase "we owe it to ourselves" lilted through the airwaves and into the popular consciousness. The government printing presses went into overdrive, yet they still couldn't match the pace of the economic collapse. Dr. New Deal's medicine was making the economy sicker, as it sank further after a fitful burst of contrived vitality. The pain would not end until Dr. New Deal morphed into Dr. Win the War—and then we graduated into a different level of pain.

In the meantime, in their frenzy to stop prices from falling and "stabilize" the economy, the New Dealers promoted a state of "equilibrium" as the ideal. This meant stasis, a state naturally reached only in death, but a perfect goal for those who had eagerly exchanged liberty for security. They tried to establish minimum prices and cartelize the economy—that was the purpose of the National Recovery Administration with its Blue Eagle ban-

ners and militaristic parades, meant to signal a show of force and beat business into submission.

The Supreme Court turned back the NRA's army, led by a general, appropriately enough, one Hugh Johnston, who drafted the Selective Service Act instituting conscription and ran Woodrow Wilson's War Industries Board. Yet the court capitulated in the end, paving the way for the rest of the Rooseveltian program, which worsened economic conditions in precisely the fashion Garrett expected: stultifying innovation, raising gigantism to sacred principle, and paying farmers to dump their crops and accept "resettlement," like the Tartars under Stalin.

In 1936, Garrett took a trip to Detroit, where the automakers, led by Ford, were making a recovery. What was the source of their success? They were competitive, making new models with all sorts of new features, and prices had dropped since 1929. Ford rejected the NRA, defied the government, and soared ahead as his profit margins swam against the tide of national trends. Today, his epigones go hat in hand to Washington to beg for a bailout.

In the mythology of modern liberalism, the New Deal is Olympus and Roosevelt is Zeus, yet not a single one of his thunderbolts hit its mark, as Garrett reminds us in *The American Story*. The New Deal "never did restore employment. It never did restore the national income," and it took the "miraculous timeliness" of a military build-up before the Depression was banished from our shores. Peacetime work projects were in short supply because local governments didn't want the maintenance costs of more schools, stadiums, and airports. But a huge national defense program was all right with conservatives and delighted liberals, who were agitating for war with Germany and Japan. The money spigot was opened, as all

welcomed a boondoggle with a patriotic gloss that provided jobs and maintained an inflationary "equilibrium." As Obama's New Deal crashes and burns on these same peaks, one can't help but think that military Keynesianism might well be his last resort, on the grounds that anything—including war—is preferable to deflation.

In the end, Garrett had to conclude that the Rooseveltian program wasn't about economic recovery. The New Deal was a grand experiment carried out for its own sake as much as for impoverished Americans, and the Brain Trusters exuded an improvisational enthusiasm that masked the purpose of the revolutionaries in power: "Like a hagfish," Garrett wrote, "the New Deal entered the old form and devoured its meaning from within. The revolutionaries were inside: the defenders were outside. A government that had been supported by the people and so controlled by the people became one that supported the people and so controlled them."

Garrett concluded, "much of it was irreversible" because "once the government ... has assumed the power to provide people with buying power when they are in want of it." The political culture, he dourly observed, "will never be the same again."

He was correct, and now, after being forgotten for these many years, Garrett is making a comeback: he's the subject of a new biography by Bruce Ramsey, *Unsanctioned Voice: Journalist of the Old Right*, and his books are being reprinted. Rather than heeding the counsel of Republican moderates, those modern day Hoovers and Landons, conservatives must recover their wits—and rediscover the lost legacy of Gareth Garrett's America. ■

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*Justin Raimondo is editorial director of Antiwar.com.*

# Off Base

Is the future of the GOP Scots-Irish or Indian-American?

By Sean Scallion

SAMUEL “JOE” WURZELBACHER didn’t plan on becoming famous. Or getting a book deal. Or being offered a Nashville recording contract. When Barack Obama came to his Holland, Ohio neighborhood during the fall campaign, Wurzelbacher simply asked the candidate an honest question about his tax policy, and Obama gave him an honest answer about “spread[ing] the wealth around.”

But from that moment on, “Joe the Plumber” became the symbol of John McCain’s presidential campaign, a cultural totem that Republican strategists hoped would energize white, working-class voters—“Average Joes,” you might say. McCain’s handlers knew what they were doing when they had their candidate repeatedly invoke Joe, and his question about Obama’s tax policy, in the last presidential debate. They also knew what they were doing when they elevated Joe from local plumber to campaign surrogate.

That McCain only excited the Republican base when other people were campaigning with him—Joe the Plumber or running mate Sarah Palin—testifies to his weakness as a candidate. But it also suggests how important identity politics has become within the Republican Party and shows that the core constituencies for the GOP are white and working or middle class—Scots-Irish, Appalachian, Southern Baptist, “hockey mom,” and “Joe Six-Pack.” These are the party’s most loyal voters, and they helped McCain avoid an election rout of Mondale proportions. The question for the GOP going forward is whether this cur-

rent of identity politics will persist or whether Obama’s presidency will create conditions that will require playing to different identities in 2012.

Not since 1968 or 1972—possibly not since 1928—had a presidential campaign delved so deeply into the composition of the white middle class. Before the 2008 election, the term “Scots-Irish” was bandied about primarily by demographers and League of the South members. But Kevin Phillips, whose 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority* taught the party to build a winning coalition of Sunbelt whites and urban Catholics, has had his eye on this group for years. His 1999 book, *The Cousins’ Wars*, described the settlement patterns of Scots-Irish emigrating to the U.S. from Ulster. The course of their migration neatly tracks the map of states and counties that McCain hoped to win. The Scots-Irish often settled first in south-central Pennsylvania and then moved south along the Appalachian Trail into western Virginia and the western Carolinas, then moved west into Kentucky, Tennessee, northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, or north into southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio and across the Mississippi River into Arkansas, Missouri, Texas, and Oklahoma. Most of these states McCain carried by sizeable margins, and even in Obama’s home state of Illinois, the southern portion—known as “Little Egypt”—voted for McCain.

Phillips’s 2006 book, *American Theocracy*, detailed how this Ulster-colonized heartland sent its surplus population westward and northward to mining

camp and dam projects in the mountain West, auto plants and other factories in the industrial Midwest, all the way to the oilfields and mines of Palin’s Alaska. In the wake of these waves of internal migration came the Southern Baptist Convention and other Southern-based Christian denominations. Over the generations, the Scots-Irish white, Christian, middle- and working-class identity that seeded much of the country broadened enough to allow other whites like Joe Wurzelbacher (who comes from a German-settled area of northwest Ohio) and Governor Palin (whose married name is Norman in origin and whose maiden name, Heath, is Scots-English) to identify with it.

Phillips gave the GOP a blueprint for turning these demographics into a political base with *The Emerging Republican Majority*. But it wasn’t Karl Rove who built the machine—it was William Brock, the former Tennessee senator who headed the Republican National Committee from 1977 to 1981. Republicans were in even worse shape at the beginning of Brock’s tenure than they are now, not just thanks to Watergate but because the old patronage system that traded government jobs for votes and campaign work had collapsed. In order for the GOP to remain competitive with the Democrats, the party needed to align itself with special-interest groups and single-issue voters that could provide organizational and financial muscle to compete with the Democratic interest blocs that emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s. Brock found what he was



looking for in the form of interest groups with roots in Scots-Irish culture—the culture of, among other things, God and guns. The National Rifle Association became politicized in 1977; the Moral Majority was founded in 1979; and the right-to-life movement aligned itself with the GOP starting in 1980. These groups were overwhelmingly white and middle class. Soon they became the cultural archetypes for red states and counties across the country.

They were, and are, deeply unpopular with the groups that have come to be identified with the Democratic Party: not just minority voters but also highly educated urban and suburban elites. Even Republican-leaning intellectuals in blue cities tend to be uncomfortable with the GOP base—and with the party's appeals to the base. Yet however queasy God and guns might make David Brooks, the Republicans could not ditch their core constituencies now even if they wanted to. If their base were suddenly to vanish, the GOP would find itself only slightly bigger than the Libertarian Party. So long as white voters over 30 make up 63 percent of the electorate, columnist Mort Kondracke has recently argued, the GOP will be wedded to its white, religious, and middle-class base.

And if anything, middle-class white identity voting may intensify as the proportion of whites declines to the point that they will no longer be a majority by 2042. Loss of political power as a fraction of the electorate may prompt them to redouble their support for candidates who share their values and social-economic background. We've already seen a preview of this intensification in the reaction from the Republican base to the choice of Palin as the party's vice presidential nominee.

Many standard-bearers for the Republican base, from James Dobson and Pat Buchanan to country-music singer John Rich, suddenly forgot all of their reser-

vations about McCain as soon as Palin's name was added to his. Anecdotes abounded in the news about McCain signs flying off the shelves of local Republican headquarters and volunteers streaming in after Palin was chosen, in contrast to the trickle of interest before. More important for the base than her positions on issues or her experience—or lack thereof—was her life story, large family, religion, and her image as a hunter and outdoors enthusiast. Those establishment and cosmopolitan conservatives who take care to remain in the good graces of the base—Bill Kristol, Sean Hannity, and Fred Barnes, among others—defended her strenuously. Criticisms of Palin by anonymous McCain aides since the campaign ended have only strengthened the base's attachment to her. They see attacks upon her as attacks upon them, and that only deepens their sense of being persecuted by an elite. This is no different from the reaction African-American voters have had toward scandal-stained politicians like Congressmen William Jefferson or Adam Clayton Powell.

Whatever her liabilities, Palin did help McCain put together a respectable showing in the Electoral College. Had the vice-presidential nod gone to Mitt Romney or McCain's personal favorite, Joe Lieberman, turnout by the base would have been further depressed and Obama might have added Missouri, Montana, the Dakotas, Georgia, and Alaska to his column and could have been competitive in South Carolina, Kansas, and Nebraska.

But Palin's candidacy exemplifies another electoral current as well, one that flows in a direction opposite to that of traditional Republican identity politics. This other tendency cannot provide the number of voters that appeals to the base supply, but it does have the power of the establishment, both in and outside the party, behind it. What's more,

future demographic changes will only strengthen this force. Call it the diversity current.

Time favors the diversity current. As Steve Sailer has pointed out, McCain's share of the white vote in 2008 would have been enough to win him the election—if it had been held in 1976. Sailer believes the GOP needs to increase its take of the white vote to 70 percent in order to win in the future. But that may not be possible. For every Scots-Irish vote the Republicans can get, there are voters from other white ethnic, economic, and cultural groups that might be lost. Overwhelmingly white Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, the New England states, Oregon, and Washington voted by comfortable margins for Obama, as Yankees, German and Scandinavian Protestants, and freethinkers aligned with the Democrats in reaction against the Scots-Irish culture of the GOP.

More fatefully, voters aged 18 through 30 went overwhelmingly for Obama. While such voters still only make up a small fraction of the electorate, they usually carry their political loyalties with them as they grow older. When Ronald Reagan carried young voters in 1984, it pointed to GOP victories in 1994 and the early part of this decade, as the Reagan generation maintained its loyalties as it grew older and became more numerous in the electorate. (Even young people who didn't vote in 1984 tended to have strong enough sympathies for Reagan that when they did begin voting, they were open to the GOP.) Even more alarming for the Republicans is that of the states McCain carried, only in eight—Alaska, Utah, Wyoming, Idaho, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Georgia, and West Virginia—did he win voters aged 18-30, according to exit polls. Missouri youngsters went 59 percent for Obama. In Tennessee, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Texas, the split was around 55-45 in favor of Obama. The Democrat gained

between 51 and 54 percent of the youth vote in Kentucky, Kansas, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, and Alabama. In Arkansas it was a tie. The youth vote was decisive in helping Obama carry North Carolina, as they voted for him by a whopping 74-26 margin and made up 18 percent of the electorate.

Conservatives have complained for years about identity voting among minority groups as an electoral form of affirmative action. But Republicans did what they could in 2008 to appeal to the diversity current: as her critics note, Palin's gender went a long way to making her McCain's running mate. Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty shared much the same background as Palin, and unlike her he was a loyal McCain supporter even during the summer of 2007, when the Arizonan's campaign was in grim shape. But Obama's nomination pushed the GOP to compete with the Democrats on the diversity scale, which meant she was on the ticket and Pawlenty was off.

Given the demographic trends, pressure on Republican leaders to respond to Obama's presidency by diversifying the party will only grow stronger. Ironically, the candidates the establishment wing of the GOP would find acceptable in 2012—Jeb Bush and Mitt Romney for example—may very well be overwhelmed by the diversity imperative the way Pawlenty was this year. If that's the case, the person who will benefit is Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, who could be the perfect candidate to balance the cosmopolitan and provincial wings of the party. He has Washington experience as a congressman but is seen as an outsider. He has a reputation as a reformer of Louisiana's notoriously corrupt state government. Unlike Palin, Jindal is a policy wonk, with experience in the health and human services field

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# Cowboy and Indians

President Bush could yet fulfill his liberation fantasy. The secret is to start small.

**By Paul Moreland**

THE ROUND REJECTION of John McCain indicates that George W. Bush's nation-building fell far short of the Shadrinsky ideal. The prospects for christening the Shining City on the Hindu Kush by Jan. 20, 2009—or Jan. 20 of any year—seem less than promising.

Granted, a let's-do-it-while-we-can attack on Iran would provide visceral release in certain quarters, but Iran is a nation already built and notably uneager to be rebuilt. Odds are that an assault on Tehran would be another one for the boondoggle column—a poor nostrum for the most fragile legacy since James Buchanan's.

Yet if we stay the course for another few weeks, GWB will forever be known as the failed nation-builder—the cowboy who rode into town, shot it up, and left. He needs one last riposte to balance things out.

While democracy is said to rest on universal principles, thus far President Bush's beau ideal has involved force-feeding freedom to recalcitrant Muslims. For one willing to challenge paradigms on the quick, however, a new frontier exists. The limitless mystery of the Amazon offers the nation-builder's equivalent of 72 virgins.

Deep within the Peruvian rainforest, the crew of an NBC reality show recently discovered a lost Indian tribe. These Indians—the Jururei—present Mr. Bush with perfect opportunity to add a solid win to his democratization score sheet.

We know little of the Jururei, but what we have learned is chilling. Far from passing the Town Square Test, these

fierce people are wholly undemocratic. The tribe's current leadership commits human-rights violations against their own people, neighboring tribes, and even the Western loggers introducing modernity from atop bulldozers.

The Jururei are led by one Sopai, a thuggish Amazonian headman. French anthropologists report that Sopai did not earn his leadership through free and fair elections, but seized power by cudgeling his predecessor to death. The common Jururei—fundamentally decent monkey trappers and tuber gatherers—are utterly disenfranchised.

When encamped, the peripatetic tribe resides within a single roundhouse called a *shabono*, in which deep divisions exist. While all Jururei adhere to the same basic form of animism, a schism has arisen between the majority, which holds the traditional belief that departed ancestors return as birds, and a minority that believes they become howler monkeys. Sopai, a fervent traditionalist, has excluded the minority faith from the tribal council and has ordered them to sleep on the jungle side of the *shabono*, where they fall prey to snakes and panthers.

Sopai's oppression of his people doesn't end with religious minorities. In this Amazonian human-rights crisis, women and sexual minorities fare no better. Previous headmen, bending to domestic pressure, permitted women to assume lucrative roles in hunting parties. Sopai immediately banned this practice. For the few women who retain hunter privileges, a thatched ceiling exists: on average, they keep just 68 percent of the

monkey meat their male counterparts do. Western apologists for tyranny argue that women retain power within the tribe's matrilineal family units. But such revisionism doesn't conceal the ugly fact that Sopai's all-male clique wields absolute political power.

Due to medical limitations, the tribe does not yet have any transgender members, and the mere suspicion of homosexuality results in immediate spearing. But it is Sopai's contempt for the sovereignty of neighboring tribes, the property rights of international logging companies, and his threats to wipe Peru off the map that trigger the alarm bells of freedom. The case for intervention is mounting:

- UN observers recently witnessed Jururei warriors, on the pretext of pursuing a particularly agile monkey, attacking a neighboring tribe, burning down its *shabono*, plundering its tuber reserves, and carrying off four women.
- A Peruvian logger hit by a Jururei poison dart died last week in a Lima hospital. DoD is testing the dart and is expected to deem it a banned biological weapon.
- Human Rights Watch is set to release a report calling Jururei aggression an "existential crisis for Sopai's neighbors."

With each passing day of inaction, Sopai is emboldened in his belief that the West will do nothing to check his regional ambitions. Shown a picture of Barbara Bush by a visiting CNN crew he proclaimed, "I will spear her."

Enemies of Freedom are already making overtures. Previously, Jururei political alliances were seasonal pacts made only with other lost tribes. Unnamed sources at the U.S. embassy in Caracas report that Hugo Chavez sent a private expression of solidarity to Sopai. And Cuban dissidents claim that the Castro brothers will bestow an honorary

generalship on Sopai during a speech at Plaza de la Revolucion.

Israeli intelligence reports that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has dispatched Al Quds operatives to transfer IED technology from Caracas junkyards to the Jururei. This terror is hampered solely by Sopai's beliefs that only avian deities residing in storm clouds can create loud booms.

With decisive leadership, it is not too late to stem this evil tide, even with less than two months to spare. Each full moon, Sopai is said to binge on a potion of fermented plantains mixed with the droppings of a colorful local frog. Following a nocturnal hallucinatory frenzy, he assumes a stuporous repose throughout the next day. It is then that the Forces of Freedom must strike.

A few casually tossed grenades will suffice for Shock and Awe. Given tribal superstitions regarding loud noises and bright lights, only the deadenders will continue to hold their spears as the invasion begins.

While it's always nice to employ a smart bomb with a live camera feed, collateral damage concerns—*shabonos*

sever the Iranian link, there will be no RPGs or roadside bombs. Looters, who we now know cannot be wished away, will be shot.

The first order of business in the transitional period will be to wire the *shabono* for Internet and satellite TV. All charges and fees will be waived for the first year, including adult pay-per-view. The wonderment of the images piped into the roundhouse will keep the Jururei at home and jumpstart democratization.

Lest the deadenders convince the common Jururei that we offer nothing more than a savory but poisoned berry, a properly indoctrinated replacement for Sopai is needed. The elder son of the headman toppled by Sopai reportedly wandered into a logging camp in August and, enthralled by his first sip of Peruvian rum, stuck around. He is being named in private circles as the likely successor, and the American Enterprise Institute is co-ordinating efforts to buy his freedom.

The unfolding Jururei crisis thus presents President Bush with a prime opportunity to apply what we learned in our trillion-dollar nation-building lesson.

## **NO STRETCHING COMBAT BRIGADES FOR THIS CAKEWALK. A COMPANY OF MARINES OR A FEW SUVs OF BLACKWATER MEN CAN HANDLE THE LIBERATION.**

are highly combustible—dictate that removing Sopai will require boots on the ground, but deliciously few. No stretching combat brigades for this cakewalk. A company of Marines or a few SUVs of Blackwater men can handle the liberation.

Before the first sun sets on the invasion, the Green Zone—a large, inexpensive tent—will be functional, though given the surrounding foliage a new name will be needed. Deviously placed snare traps aside, the danger from insurgency will be *de minimis*. Assuming we

There will be challenges. Anthropologists warn that the body politic of the Jururei may vanish into the jungle. Surviving hunting party members may be reluctant to turn over spears and bows. We'll face a shortage of translators and other cultural barriers. But Mr. Bush will find no better chance to show Mr. Obama that the key is not to abandon nation-building. You just have to start small and work your way up. ■

*Paul Moreland is the pen name of an immigration lawyer in New York City.*

# Withered Conservatism

Conservatives bicker about spending and abortion but refuse to face the real cause of the Republican rout.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

AFTER TWO DEVASTATING election cycles for the GOP, conservatives were expected to “rethink” their movement. Signs of dissent and disintegration among the Right were everywhere in the months leading up to the election. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks called the lovefest for Sarah Palin a “cancer” on the Republican Party. Rush Limbaugh used his microphone to attack John McCain for not attacking Barack Obama and to assail moderates for their capitulations to liberalism. *National Review Online* columnist Kathleen Parker blamed electoral defeats on the influence of the Religious Right. After joining the growing ranks of Obamacons, Christopher Buckley resigned from the magazine his father founded. But Obama’s victory did not bring the anticipated recriminations among the defeated. In fact, the conservative movement isn’t rethinking much of anything.

The acceptable lines of debate among conservatives were drawn six days after the election by David Brooks. On one side he put “traditionalists” who “argue the G.O.P. should return to its core ideas: Cut government, cut taxes, restrict immigration.” He deemed Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh the leaders of this faction. On the other side he put “reformers” who want to modernize the party so that it appeals to Hispanics and younger voters and addresses the economic insecurities of the middle class. This group includes some neoconserva-

tives like David Frum and Brooks himself, along with Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, authors of the domestic-policy tract *Grand New Party*.

*National Review*’s post-election conference, “Whither Conservatism,” cast intra-conservative debates along similar lines. In a panel on domestic policy, Kim Strassel of the *Wall Street Journal* played the role of “traditionalist,” arguing for stringent free-marketism and broad tax cuts, while *National Review*’s “reformer,” Jim Manzi, focused on suburban issues like sprawl and transportation. A discussion titled “The Future of Conservatism,” moderated by Brooks, featured Douthat and Ramesh Ponnuru on the reformer side, with *NR*’s Jonah Goldberg, Hillsdale’s David Bobb and Cato’s Gene Healy arguing for a return to the party’s old playbook. Panel members essentially argued that they each represented the future of conservatism.

Framed as a struggle between these two factions, the debate about conservatism descends quickly into details about domestic policy. Should child tax credits be expanded, or should conservatives back across-the-board tax relief? Should conservatives support domestic drilling or find ways to incentivize alternative energy consumption? These discussions revolved around two more foundational questions. Can small-government policies win popular support? Should conservatives use government to protect and enhance family life and

the free market? The idea that both answers may be “no” never troubled a panelist.

The other point of contention between “traditionalists” and “reformers” is stylistic and cultural. David Frum wrote in Canada’s *National Post*, “The dominant wing in today’s GOP is the ‘say it louder’ wing.” This faction is unabashedly populist in tone and prides itself on speaking to “real Americans.” Its influence buoyed the good-hearted but green Sarah Palin. But reformers like Frum balk at the anti-intellectual tone of a movement that promotes creation science and global-warming-denialism. They prefer competent and innovative governors like Minnesota’s Tim Pawlenty who have largely avoided confrontations in the culture war. Frum has argued that chasing after the growing segment of college-educated voters “will involve painful change, on issues ranging from the environment to abortion. And it will involve potentially even more painful changes of style and tone: toward a future that is less overtly religious, less negligent with policy, and less polarizing on social issues.”

But while conservatives discuss whether to moderate the party’s position on abortion or change its small government doctrine, there is one non-negotiable issue. The defining legacy of the Bush presidency and the primary cause of electoral disaster for Republicans was the Iraq War. But the war is the one thing the conservative movement



will not allow itself to question. *National Review* chose three Iraq War supporters for its panel on "The Coming Foreign Policy Debate." Moderator Rich Lowry introduced AEI's Frederick Kagan by stating that he "deserved a medal" for conceiving and promoting the surge strategy. There to "debate" him was the Jacksonian hawk, Andrew McCarthy, who has argued, "If we don't suppress Iran, Syria, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and the Sunni terror funding stream in Saudi Arabia, we can't win in Iraq." The token realist was Paul Saunders of the Nixon Center, who served as senior adviser to the undersecretary of state for global affairs in the Bush administration.

Saunders argued smartly that Americans do not pay enough attention "to the morality of foreign-policy outcomes" and credit themselves too much "for their good intentions when they do intervene." But he hesitated to question the wisdom of the Iraq War, only its execution: "We should think about what we did there after the invasion."

McCarthy, representing the most feverish war supporters, suggested that threats to American hegemony were less from without than within: "We have a fifth column in this country that is larger than we like to think," he sputtered. McCarthy defended the Bush doctrine as a practical guide to foreign policy, while partially blaming the setbacks in Iraq on "ingrate" Iraqis.

Instead of rethinking the scale of American military commitments in the face of limited resources, Kagan argued for vast increases in defense spending. To those who dissent from this line of argument he asked, "How did we get from 1929 to 1939?"

By avoiding tough questions about the Iraq War and by framing the debate as between "Say It Louder" populists and rational realists, the conservative movement avoids nearly all responsibility

for the collapse of the Republican Party. Traditionalists can argue that they did not support Bush's spending and never loved McCain. Reformers will say that their innovative ideas were ignored and that they privately mocked Sarah Palin. Both sides can claim Reagan as their hero and not one cozy sinecure or generous foundation grant is in jeopardy. The debate about the future of conservatism is settled because no one is willing to risk harming the movement itself.

In the week leading up to the conference, *National Review Online* editor Kathryn Jean Lopez quoted the publisher's statement from the first issue of the magazine: "For we offer, besides ourselves, a position that has not grown old under the weight of a gigantic, parasitic bureaucracy, a position untempered by the doctoral dissertations of a generation of Ph.D's in social architecture, unattenuated by a thousand vulgar promises to a thousand different pressure groups, uncorroded by a cynical contempt for human freedom. And that, ladies and gentlemen, leaves us just about the hottest thing in town."

Lopez promised, "we will work to ensure that statement is always true." But it is not true. The conservative movement's position has grown moldy with the corruption of the Bush administration. The movement is weighed down not by doctoral dissertations but by think tanks that turn genuine conservative insights into propaganda. In the 50 years since that statement was written, the Right has developed its own interest groups. Liberal contempt for human freedom has been joined by conservative naïveté about human nature. Having grown as weary and attenuated as the midcentury establishment it sought to dethrone, the conservative movement is no longer about ideas but opportunism. Instead of offering a vision for the future, panelists proposed future candi-

dates: Bobby Jindal of Louisiana or Mark Sanford of South Carolina. In the meantime, the conservative movement is happy to allow Obama to set the terms of the discussion.

Kim Strassel announced, "The tax debate won't be all that hard in the Obama administration. He will unify us in opposition." Heather Mac Donald said it would be amusing to watch House Republicans rediscover their fiscal conservatism once a Democrat enters the Oval Office. Would they be accused of hypocrisy after their profligate record under Bush? "Yes," Mac Donald said, "but if you want fiscal conservatism, that is the price." Jonah Goldberg admitted that while he enjoyed intra-conservative debates, he expected that the Obama administration would do the work of unifying the movement for them.

He is probably right. Before 2006, nearly all pundits agreed that Democrats would have to learn to reach out to white evangelicals, moderate their positions on social issues, and temper their opposition to the Iraq War or they would face minority status forever. But Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi never attempted to reinvent liberalism. Neither did Obama. Bush's failures made it easy for Democrats to increase their majorities in Congress and take back the White House.

The conservative movement is also sustained by failures. It is too painful to uproot the think tanks and dismantle the direct-mail operations. It would be too incriminating to question the justice of the Iraq War. As long as Bush's incompetence can be written off as unique, the movement can avoid any serious re-examination of its beliefs or actions during his presidency. And if Obama stumbles while managing the two wars and collapsing economy Bush handed him, the movement stands to profit from those missteps as well. The ideas don't matter anymore. ■

# Goldwater Standard

I sent my first paycheck as a bagboy at the A&P grocery store—\$19 and some odd cents—as a contribution to the Barry Goldwater campaign. That was the summer

of 1964, and I was just getting ready to start my senior year in high school.

That election produced a landslide for the Democrats and left Republicans outnumbered 295 to 140 in the United States House. Many pundits said then that the GOP had gone too far to the right. Several said the party was dead.

But two years later, we picked up 46 seats in the House, eight in the Senate, and six governorships, including Ronald Reagan in California. Seeds planted in the disastrous defeat of 1964 led to the Reagan presidency and what many have called the Conservative Revolution. The Republican Party grew when it offered a real alternative to the Democrats, not when it became a me-too party.

Fast forward to 1990. I will never forget a panicky, late night Republican conference meeting in the Cannon House Office Building. Ed Rollins was then head of the National Republican Congressional Committee. Polls showed that Republicans were going to pick up 20 to 30 seats in the House, but the first President Bush had abandoned his no new taxes pledge a few weeks before. Rollins told us the latest polls showed that Republican candidates had dropped 10 points almost overnight.

Candidates who had been ahead 60-40 were suddenly tied; those ahead 55-45 were behind. Rollins advised us to run as far away from the president as possible. Two days later, he was fired on orders from the White House. Congressional Republicans had voted 105-71 against the tax increase, withstanding tremendous lobbying by the president and his cabinet. Still, we lost 10 seats.

By early 1992, the economy had slowed drastically, but the president spent most of his State of the Union speech talking about success in Iraq. My brother called later and told me every bartender in America probably changed channels after the first few minutes. The first President Bush, by increasing taxes and seeming to care more about people in other countries than people in the U.S., gave us Bill Clinton.

He in turn gave Republicans the majority in Congress in 1994, which we have now squandered thanks largely to the second President Bush, who launched an unnecessary war in Iraq and produced record deficits. Unbelievably, he allowed the Democrats to claim the mantle of fiscal conservatism and made way for the most far-left president in American history in Barack Obama. My father told me many years ago that your friends can do you much more harm than your enemies.

A Republican House member from Kentucky told me a few months before the election, "The president is killing us." A few days after the election, a Republican member from New York told me, "The president killed us."

It got so bad that no member of the House or Senate in any tight race wanted the president—described on one national television program as "the invisible man of the campaign"—to join him on the stump. He spent the last weekend hidden away at Camp David.

Now everyone is giving advice and discussing the future of the Grand Old Party. Some liberal pundits are saying that if the Republicans do not become

more "inclusive"—which is to say, more like the Democrats—the party will be relegated to the dustbin of history.

Where do we go from here? Well, Senator Obama won by masking his left-wing views and in some respects running an America First campaign. He advocated tax breaks for companies that create jobs in the United States. He said the \$12 billion a month being spent in Iraq should be spent on people in whichever state he was campaigning.

But we cannot out-promise President-elect Obama. Our only hope is a return to traditional conservatism—not a lukewarm conservatism, but that of Pat Buchanan, Russell Kirk, Phyllis Schlafly, and Barry Goldwater. William Buckley, before he passed away, was strongly opposed to our misadventure in Iraq, much to the embarrassment of *National Review* and the neocons.

We need to ignore advice from self-serving "big government conservatives" such as Bill Kristol, who once said he could work just as well with liberal Democrats. We need to show how big-government policies have driven up the cost of medical care and college tuition, housing and energy. Too much government always results in very few at the top and very many at the bottom. About the only thing big government is good at is wiping out the middle class.

True conservatism lifts all boats. The wealthy come out alright under almost any system. Everyone, especially those at the bottom economically, come out better under small-government conservatism.

That's a case we can win—if only Republicans will remember their conservative roots. ■

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*Congressman John Duncan represents the Second District of Tennessee.*

# Meet the Old Boss

“It is my belief that it is neither in the interest of our party or the advancement of our conservative principles to simply affirm the status quo by acclamation in

light of what happened on November 4th.” So said Rep. Dan Lungren of California when he announced his token run for House minority leader against John Boehner. But by Nov. 19, the most important part of the leadership status quo had been affirmed, and Boehner remained in his post.

While the new House GOP leadership as a whole marks a shift to the Right and includes several outspoken opponents of the financial sector bailout, all of the members of the new leadership were selected by Boehner, and the top leadership posts went to those who presided over two of the worst consecutive electoral debacles in modern U.S. history and one final capitulation to the outgoing administration.

Perversely, Boehner has retained his popularity in the conference thanks to his particularly ineffective leadership, which portends a long, slow recovery for Republicans. Initially opposed to the bailout, famously dubbing it a “crap sandwich,” Boehner implored Republicans to support the bill before the floor vote—while giving opponents license to vote it down if they wanted. Practicing a leadership style that deliberately departs from the heavy-handed methods of Tom DeLay when he was whip, Boehner’s relatively hands-off approach has won him continued support from the Republican conference despite two and a half years filled with no legislative accomplishments and major electoral setbacks.

The new whip, Eric Cantor, voted in favor of the bailout and distinguished himself in the worst way by claiming

after the initial defeat of the Stabilization Act that Nancy Pelosi’s “partisan” speech prior to the vote had driven many Republicans to oppose the bill. As deputy to former whip Roy Blunt, Cantor was party to the failure to round up enough Republican votes and then compounded the error with his absurd complaints. That display was a preview of what we can expect in the next Congress: Cantor was unwilling to acknowledge the principled reasons that his colleagues opposed the bill and equally unwilling to take responsibility for his share of the leadership’s failure. While Cantor is well regarded by his colleagues and was rumored to be a possible vice-presidential pick earlier this year, he represents the House Republicans at their least imaginative.

There may be reason for conservatives to cheer part of the new leadership team, beginning with the promotion of bailout opponents Mike Pence and Thaddeus McCotter to the conference and policy committee chairs respectively. McCotter was particularly strong and reasonable in his denunciation of the bailout proposal, and Pence was among the most prominent dissenters. But if Pence’s past support for a guest-worker program and his preoccupation with the non-issue of the return of the Fairness Doctrine are any indication of the new leadership’s priorities, conservatives are likely to be disappointed with what passes for a positive Republican agenda.

What should trouble them more is the House GOP’s willingness to fall in

line behind discredited political leaders, a habit that has done a great deal to bring the party to its current pass. Before the leadership vote, Rep. Mike Burgess of Texas, a challenger running for policy committee chair, remarked to *The New Republic*’s Eve Fairbanks, “If we stamp [Boehner’s roster] and walk out of the room in fifteen minutes, our supporters, conservatives across the country, will think, ‘Well, these guys clearly have not suffered enough.’” While it may have taken longer than 15 minutes, this is exactly what happened.

The last two elections have demonstrated that Republicans are disconnected from the majority of Americans, and nowhere has this been more apparent than in the House election results. The re-election of Boehner as leader confirms how out of touch they remain from their own constituents and from the nation as a whole.

Having failed to recognize the real causes of the 2006 defeat, the House GOP also seems incapable of learning from the successes of their opponents. After House Democrats suffered a smaller but much more unusual mid-term defeat in 2002, then Minority Leader Dick Gephardt resigned. His resignation led to the elevation of Nancy Pelosi, the beginning of a more effective Democratic opposition, and the formation of the leadership team that engineered the capture of the majority.

Confronted with unfavorable demographic and cultural changes, the House GOP will have to be more creative and will have to do more than simply replace leaders, but no recovery will be possible until Republicans begin to acknowledge their failures and remove those who led them into the minority. ■

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[Australia]

### Too Big Not to Fail

By Steve Sailer

THE PREFAB national epic “Australia,” a sprawling romance set in the desolate Northern Territory during World War II, represents a risky change in subject and style for Baz Luhrmann, one of this era’s most distinctive directors.

Luhrmann might not be the most naturally talented auteur, but he’s one of the bravest, willing to carve out, through trial and error, his own cinematic language, then throw it away and try to find another one.

His first three films comprised his Red Curtain Trilogy. He started in 1992 with the dance-contest movie “Strictly Ballroom” and followed with “Romeo + Juliet,” in which Leonardo DiCaprio declaims in iambic pentameter in Verona Beach, Florida. Finally, Luhrmann drove the film fanboys insane with rage but won the hearts of young women with the lushly wretched excess of his astonishing 2001 musical “Moulin Rouge,” in which Ewan McGregor and Nicole Kidman, as the doomed lovers in 1899 Montmartre, not only break into song but into songs that wouldn’t be written for decades.

Luhrmann worked out a novel set of conventions for his Red Curtain style, the maximalist opposite of Lars Von Trier’s more celebrated but less successful Dogme 95 minimalism. Like Bollywood musicals intended to be understood by peasant audiences, the Red

Curtain rules stressed blatantly unrealistic theatrical artifice; plots that are time-tested if not downright hackneyed (in “Moulin Rouge” we quickly infer from *La Traviata* and *La Bohème* that the beautiful courtesan must ultimately die of consumption in the young poet’s arms); and shameless melodrama, all as “a device to disarm oh-so-clever, oh-so-cool people, so that you can have these very direct emotional experiences,” as Luhrmann explained in 2001.

Perhaps tired of everyone assuming that he must be gay because he made musicals—Luhrmann and his wife, Oscar-winning costume designer Catherine Martin, have two small children—Luhrmann decided to make the great Australian movie.

In “Australia,” Luhrmann and company work awfully hard to entertain us. The extraordinary lighting ought to ensure that his director of photography, Mandy Walker, becomes the first woman ever Oscar-nominated for Best Cinematography.

Still, the mixed results of “Australia” suggest that it’s better to start a national epic with a good story (Scarlett and Rhett, say) than with enormous ambition but no plot. Luhrmann and his three co-writers ginned up a scenario in which Kidman plays a starchy English aristocrat who has inherited 7.5 million acres of outback. Hugh Jackman (Wolverine of “X-Men”) is the ruggedly affable cowboy who must drive her 1,500 head of cattle to Darwin’s dock. When watching “Moulin Rouge,” you always knew how it would end, but never knew what would happen next. With “Australia,” a prolonged pastiche of famous epics, you can always guess what comes next, but never know *when* it will end.

This framework does allow Luhrmann to drag in edifying events from Aus-

tralia’s rather undramatic history books, such as the Pearl Harbor-lite bombing of Darwin by the Japanese in 1942 and the oft-lamented “Stolen Generations” of half-Aboriginal children who were taken away from their alcoholic mothers and given free educations. Luhrmann ladles on plenty of the kitschy Aboriginal spirituality that the Australian tourist board employs to distract from the appalling condition of Aborigines under today’s multiculturalist welfare state.

Despite his populist sympathies, Luhrmann remains an idiosyncratic experimentalist better suited to eight-figure than nine-figure budgets. In “Moulin Rouge,” he found a stylistic rule that organized his film. As the story turned from comedy to tragedy, the pace of the editing slowed from frenetic to monumental. In “Australia,” though, he doesn’t seem to have yet stumbled upon a mode to suit his new genre. I hope studios keep giving him \$130 million per epic until he does, although I fear they won’t.

Jackman and Kidman are fine, but they’re fairly generic movie stars. It’s hard not to wonder what Australia’s A-Team, Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett, might have done. Of course, without better lines than “Australia” musters, Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh themselves would not have generated much movie magic.

The film is saved by the performance of newcomer Brandon Walters as the little half-Aboriginal boy who narrates. The camera loves his big eyes and dark gold hair, and he has an ingenuous way with pidgin English (“We gonna drive ev’ryonna those fat cheeky bulls allaway to da big metal boat!”) that left me calling, for perhaps the first time ever, for “less dialogue, more voiceover!” ■

Rated PG-13 for some violence, a scene of sensuality, and brief strong language.



## BOOKS

[*Hamilton's Curse: How Jefferson's Arch Enemy Betrayed the American Revolution—and What It Means for America Today*, Thomas J. DiLorenzo, Crown Forum, 256 Pages]

### Centralist American

By Alan Pell Crawford

"WE PRACTICE HAMILTON from January 1 to July 3 every year," the historian James Thurslow Adams wrote in 1929. "On July 4 we hurrah like mad for Jefferson. The next day we quietly take up Hamilton again for the rest of the year as we go about our business." Today, of course, we not only practice Hamilton but hurrah for him, too. The last decade has produced a gusher of admiring looks at the ambitious upstart whom John Adams called a "bastard son of a Scots peddler," and there is much to admire about Hamilton the man. Lacking the advantages of the well-born and well-to-do Founders, Hamilton proved to be as brilliant and capable as any of them and more influential than most. Yet today's admirers—Ron Chernow, John Steele Gordon, Richard Brookhiser, and Michael Lind, notably—revere Hamilton's economic program, which they credit, accurately, for American capitalism as we know it.

DiLorenzo does not regard Hamilton's legacy in the same favorable light, and the evidence he marshals in this spirited polemic is persuasive. Hamilton is the architect of our economic, financial, and even political system, and this is indeed in many ways unfortunate. A critic of the Articles of Confederation, proponent of the Constitutional Convention, and advocate for ratification of the Constitution that replaced the Articles, Hamilton, as a pamphleteer and first secretary

of the Treasury, made no secret of his desire to create an "energetic" executive-for-life, enthroned atop an oligarchy based on a model of European mercantilism. Hamilton was a realist, who understood, though not without regret, that monarchy—which he preferred to the republican form of government his fellow Founders favored—would never fly with Americans who had just fought a war against the British crown.

Even so, Hamilton won most of his battles, especially when, as a member of George Washington's cabinet, he clashed with the more republican—we would say democratic—Thomas Jefferson, Washington's secretary of state. In Washington's councils, the foundations of the American economic system were laid, and the long-term effect, DiLorenzo writes,

reads like a catalog of the ills of modern government: an out-of-control, unaccountable, monopolistic bureaucracy in Washington, D.C.; the demise of the Constitution as a restraint on the federal government's powers; the end of the idea that the citizens of the states should be their masters, rather than the servants, of their government; generations of activist federal judges who have eviscerated the constitutional protections of individual liberty in America; national debt; harmful protectionist international trade policies; corporate welfare (that is, the use of tax dollars to subsidize various politically connected businesses); and central economic planning and political control of the money supply, which have instigated boom-and-bust cycles in the economy.

Hamilton's arguments—in *The Federalist* (1787-1788), in his *Report on Manufactures* (1791), and in his *Opinion as to the Constitutionality of The Bank of the United States* (1791)—"are repeated to this day by academics, politicians, and others who favor a bigger, more activist government with unbridled

executive powers." In almost every case, DiLorenzo, a Loyola College economics professor, declares that the programs and policies these neo-Hamiltonians support have had lamentable economic effects and woeful political consequences, which we suffer from to this day. This is all argued forcefully and, for the most part, convincingly.

Still and all, the case seems rather more complicated than DiLorenzo makes out, and *Hamilton's Curse* would have benefited from a more precise and comprehensive explanation of the real choices that Americans faced. There is far too little of Jefferson and Jefferson's alternative. And what DiLorenzo does include about Jefferson is not always accurate. In this book, the third president appears only rarely and then merely as an example of all the blessings that the nation rejected when it threw in its lot with Hamilton. Whatever objectionable policy Hamilton supported, Jefferson opposed.

But this was not always the case. The two men certainly differed in their broader visions of America's future. They were often in opposition but not always. It would surprise some of Jefferson's right-wing admirers, for example, to learn that he was not dogmatically opposed to progressive taxation. A good way of "silently lessening the inequality of property," Jefferson wrote to James Madison, "is to exempt all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometric profession as they rise."

Nor was Jefferson the unqualified advocate of secession that paleoconservatives and neo-anarchists like to believe. Under "Jeffersonian federalism," DiLorenzo writes, "peaceful secession was always considered to be an essential part of any genuinely federal compact." Perhaps in theory. But in practice, Jefferson denounced secessionists. At the time of the Hartford Convention, when New England Federalists, opposed to the War of 1812, threatened to secede, Jefferson also became a Hamiltonian "nationalist." He gave voice to what DiLorenzo would regard as mys-

tical, proto-Lincolnian utterances about “the union of our country” and condemned those who encouraged “rebellion, civil war, dissolution of the government, and the miseries of anarchism.”

Although he denounced the Hartford conferees as the “Marats, the Dantons and the Robespierres of Massachusetts,” who wished “to anarchise us,” Jefferson was not worried by them. “No event, more than this,” he wrote of official tolerance of their secessionist threats, “has shown the placid character of our Constitution. Under any other, their treasons would have been punished by the halter. We let them live as laughing stocks for the world, and punish them by the torment of eternal contempt.”

*Hamilton’s Curse* would have been more persuasive had the author shown us how and why Hamilton prevailed—why his arguments seemed more compelling in their day than Jefferson’s or how moneyed interests were able to overwhelm the Jeffersonian opposition. DiLorenzo suggests that the realities of power politics somehow doomed the

Jeffersonian program, though he does not exactly say so. The author attributes much of Hamilton’s success to his “clever manipulation” of words, but too often DiLorenzo himself prefers to imply rather than argue.

Those with whom the author disagrees, be they past or present, are routinely presented as not just mistaken but as rogues and scoundrels whose motives are driven by self-interest if not outright malevolence. In DiLorenzo’s telling, the “totalitarian-minded” Hamilton and his followers use “ruses,” “phony rhetoric,” “smokescreens,” and “schemes.” They employ these devices to “fool” their countrymen into approving their dubious “capers.” They rely on “strong-armed tactics” and “bribes.” When the constitutionality of a law is upheld, it’s a “rubber-stamp” from the Supreme Court. The effect is to reduce Hamilton and those who share his notion of what America should be to con artists engaged in an immensely clever, get-rich-quick plot.

For instance, the “scheming” John Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court from 1801-35 is presented as Hamilton’s stooge, who “smeared” theories of state sovereignty. Deploying the “Hamiltonian Big Lie,” he “fabricated a false history of the American founding.” This alleged falsehood was Marshall’s opinion in *McCulloch v. Maryland* (1819), which rested on the claim that, in DiLorenzo’s paraphrase, “the states were never sovereign and that the Constitution was somehow the result of a national plebiscite,” ratified not by the states but, as Marshall wrote, by “the whole people.”

*McCulloch v. Maryland* was indeed a monumental—and perhaps monumentally wrongheaded—decision, but to present it as simply another in the long list of Hamiltonian “tricks” does not explain enough.

This argument fails to tell us, for example, why such a “false history” would appear to be true—to intelligent and well-informed people inside of government and out—so soon after ratification had taken place.

The overall effect of this unduly rancorous presentation is decidedly Hobbesian. It is not surprising, however, that those who regard Hamilton’s legacy as destructive feel as alienated and angry toward contemporary America as they do. Precisely because Hamilton’s side won, and won so early in the game, America today is indeed Hamiltonian (and Lincolnian). This presents paleos such as DiLorenzo—also the author of two critical studies of Lincoln—with a serious problem. Their argument seems less with Hamilton (or Lincoln) than with America itself.

Perhaps as a result, some of DiLorenzo’s recommendations for “ending the [Hamiltonian] curse” are unhelpful. It is highly unlikely, for example, that Americans in the 21st century would repeal the 17th Amendment, abolishing the popular election of U.S. senators and returning to a system in which they are chosen by appointment by state legislatures.

That said, one does sympathize with those who retain an attachment to political liberty as it once was in this country, and who feel that they have been betrayed. The contribution they can make today is not political, one suspects, but literary and historical. They can remind us, as DiLorenzo does quite ably in this provocative and original book, of the price we have paid for the world we have chosen.

And their ranks will surely grow. Shortly after Gore Vidal’s novel *Burr* was published, the libertarian Karl Hess was asked at a gathering of Washington conservatives what he thought of Jefferson’s disgraced vice president. “My only real beef with Burr,” Hess replied, “was that he didn’t shoot Hamilton sooner.” Hess uttered those words more than 30 years ago, when conservatives professed to believe that deficit spending was bad. One can understand why, these days, those who really do regard public debt as a menace might agree. ■

*Alan Pell Crawford is the author of Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson.*

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[George Kennan: A Writing Life,  
Lee Congdon, 151, 183 pages]

## Literary Ambassador

By Walter Hudson

IN HIS FAMOUS 1947 ARTICLE, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," George Frost Kennan (under the now famous pseudonym Mr. X), sought to explain the motivations behind the Soviet dictatorship. For insight, he sought not Marx or Trotsky, but Edward Gibbon: "From enthusiasm to imposture ... how the conscience may slumber in a mixed and middle way between self-illusion and voluntary fraud." Near the end of his article, Kennan turned to Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, that towering work of familial decay and doom. Kennan speculated that, just as the Buddenbrooks family had shone most brilliantly at the point when its inner decay was most advanced, so did the Soviet Union appear on the surface to be most terrifyingly powerful even as it bore within it the seeds of its own destruction. Self-deception, hubris, and ignorance—human frailties took control of the engine of dialectical materialism. Marxism, according to Mr. X, was "a highly convenient rationalization for [Russian revolutionaries'] instinctive desires."

The informing sensibility of containment was, as Lee Congdon makes clear in *George Kennan: A Writing Life*, a literary one. Kennan was, first and always, a man of letters. Like Jefferson, he could not live without books. Congdon notes how he actually "released his frustration" by reading. Kennan's devotion to the Russian masters, especially Chekhov, was profound. He made literary pilgrimages to places where the great writer-doctor lived, seriously contemplated writing a book about him, and more than once, used Chekhov's story, "A Case in Practice," to show that the truth of the workers' plight was found not in Marxist abstractions, but in rather common human weaknesses.

With Congdon's help, we see Kennan's career and prolific output in a new way. Many books have picked apart Kennan's thought. The debate has gone on for decades about what containment really meant and whether Kennan was, as the Cold War revisionists claimed, really a hawk or, as the neoconservatives argued, a revisionist. But Kennan, despite spending the first part of his long life as a diplomat and policy planner in the State Department, was always defined by his sense as a writer, not as a strategist or policymaker. As Congdon says, "he gave so much of himself to his writing, official and personal, and labored with such determination to perfect his style."

Indeed, with no other major public figure of the last century do we have such a rich and diverse source of writing. Congdon reviews Kennan's written words carefully, giving unfamiliar readers a fruitful introduction. One part of this writing is public. This includes the public-policy statements, most famously the Mr. X article that helped define the Cold War. Down the years, these became increasingly pessimistic pronouncements about the state of the West, the arms race, and America's befuddled relations with the Soviet Union—books with titles such as *The Cloud of Danger* and *The Nuclear Delusion*.

Then there are the histories, mostly dealing with 19th- and early 20th-century high diplomacy and the early years of the Soviet Union. In his elegant prose, Kennan went against the grain of the various "new history" trends of his era. He focused on personalities as much as events. Despite the density of their scholarship, his historical works make compelling reading. His two volumes on early U.S.-Soviet relations are modern historical classics.

To help us understand these policy pronouncements and scholarly explorations, Congdon places his subject in a literary-historical context. He fits Kennan squarely into the tradition of political realists, especially Hans Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr, Walter Lippmann and Henry Kissinger. He shows us Kennan's resemblance to Oswald Spengler and his

pessimism; to Gibbon and his arguments for self-control and moderation; to Freud and his notions of the subconscious and of desire's ability to limit human reason. Congdon also notes his admiration for Rachel Carson. Kennan's conservationist impulses made him an agrarian-environmentalist and even gave him metaphors for policy: "We must be gardeners and not mechanics in our approach to world affairs," he once wrote, "We must come to think of the development of international life as an organic and not a mechanical process."

Then there are Kennan's personal writings: his two volumes of memoirs; his more informal reflections (appropriately called *Sketches From a Life*); his fascinating, almost strange "personal philosophy," *Around the Cragged Hill*, in which he argued, among other things, that the United States should be broken up into smaller governing entities. And then we have his last book, a history of his own family entitled *The Kennans: The First Three Generations*. Written as he neared his centenary, wisdom and fealty combined to produce both a moving tribute to his New England ancestors and a reflection on what he thought a realized life should be. Commenting on his forefathers, he wrote, "They seemed all to have been 'whole' persons, content with their background, afflicted with neither inferiority nor of superiority vis-à-vis others, pretending to be nothing other than what they actually were."

To be "whole," to know and rest assuredly in oneself, was Kennan's goal. Congdon contends that Kennan's sense of himself came as an intensely literate and literary man. He tirelessly worked on his daily journals and labored over his diplomatic dispatches. He did not report like a diplomat or a government functionary; he tried to make sure his observations were both accurate and artful. It is the reflection in Kennan's writings that makes them so compelling and allows them to transcend the political limits of their time.

If we take these public and personal writings together, we begin to understand that Kennan was arguing for a

change not so much of policies but of sensibility. As he wrote in his lectures on "The Realities of American Foreign Policy," given at the height of anticommunist fervor in the 1950s: "do not permit [communism] to preoccupy your thoughts but rather insist on the right to proceed with your positive undertakings in spite of it."

Kennan's sense of himself was unique but not singular. He had some resemblances to the fictional Gatsby: a Midwestern boy transplanted into the East Coast establishment, who remained consciously unassimilated, standing apart from the party that he started. After providing the first strategy of containment, Kennan spent much of his life redefining or disowning what most people thought that it was. And he also began to resemble, Congdon notes, that typical American literary expatriate, a Henry James or T.S. Eliot, alienated from his country, or what his country had become.

The resemblance to Eliot, the modernist mandarin, is close. Both were Midwesterners with New England roots; both sought out a deeper sense of themselves in Europe; both were aristocratic and elitist in outlook; both were suspicious of the excesses of American democracy. And both were distrustful of excesses of sentiment. Eliot came upon the objective correlative as a way to express symbolically and intellectually states of feeling—an aesthetic vehicle or "container" for emotion. Kennan, for his part, sought to rein in American Exceptionalism and messianism in his own formulation of containment: "such a policy," he said, "has nothing to do with outward histrionics; with threats or blustering or superfluous gestures of outward toughness."

Kennan believed in a variation of the seemingly quaint Romantic notion of poets as mankind's unacknowledged legislators. Congdon observes that Kennan humbly acknowledged that even his greatest efforts as a historian would not reach into the "inner world" of his subjects as much as a literary master could. He could dutifully inspect exteriors, but it took a Chekhov to cast

light on "the anarchy, the tenderness, and the brutality of the individual soul." Even more anachronistically, Kennan believed that such great art transcended politics. Congdon quotes his address as president of the American Academy of Arts and Letters: "The vicissitudes of war and politics," he wrote, "should never be permitted to interfere with the work of the creative artist."

Astute commentators have picked up on Kennan's literary qualities. Eugene V. Rostow wrote that Kennan was "an impressionist, a poet, not an earthling. His mind has never moved along mathematical lines, and never will." Secretary of State George Marshall admired Kennan's insights and appreciated his unique talents. On the other hand, Dean Acheson, a much less substantive man than his predecessor, did not and dismissed him as a kind of diplomat-dreamer.

But Kennan's subtle literary intuition was integral to his policy successes. Take the European Recovery (aka Marshall) Plan, for which he drew the broad outlines. The plan was not simply or even primarily an economic tool—some conservatives badly misunderstand this and thus discount its efficacy. It was a carefully calibrated, deliberately limited political move (it emphasized self-recovery; it limited itself to Europe), a powerful resonating symbol of American resolve that delegitimized Soviet influence in France, Italy, and Germany without resorting to arms.

Congdon shows that the Marshall Plan and Kennan's idea of containment were informed by a profound literary humanism that naturally inclined toward distinction and moderation in world affairs. Kennan's was not a secular humanism, however. As has become apparent, secular humanism—especially today's boorish, atheistic kind—has itself become an implacable ideology, complete with straw men (religious fundamentalists, "Islamofascists") and "scientific" dogmas (think "racial biology") as stultifying as those of the last century. Kennan's humanism respected traditions, especially religious ones. He recognized that a religion is not defined

by its ideological components. Kennan saw religious traditions as bringing out the best in men, and as providing comfort and dignity to fallen human beings.

This sense of fallen man informed Kennan's histories as well. In them, he warns us against excesses of zeal: the Wilsonian imperatives that split up the Hapsburg Empire; the angered revanchism that pushed together the disastrous Franco-Russian alliance; the misguided sympathies that Americans felt for the Russian revolutionaries, crudely projecting their notions of "democracy" and "freedom" upon them. Kennan's encounter with the great literary traditions of Russia also gave him a deep love of that nation and its people. If Americans today think of Russians as little more than drunken, sex-trafficking gangsters, we can read Kennan with profit to learn otherwise. He profoundly respected Russian orthodoxy, with its beautiful ritual and music and its "ready acceptance of the mysteries of faith," and he was one of the first Anglo-Americans to overcome the deep sense of Russia as part of the other, uncivilized Europe.

Kennan's sensibility helped him transcend the political configuration of Right and Left, to move beyond rigid ideologies. He was conservative in his appreciation for the past and in his respect for tradition and his ancestors. He also lamented the militarization of American foreign policy and was critical of unfettered capitalism and the destruction it wrought upon the environment. At the same time, he deplored the mainstreaming of hedonism and the breakdown of traditional values in the West, at times in language so strong one might wonder if Kennan thought the West worth defending at all.

What was worth defending, however, was the tradition that Kennan embodied. Lee Congdon has, through Kennan's writings, revealed some of the best examples of this tradition, provided to us in the previous and most terrible century. ■

*Walter Hudson has written for The Latin Mass, Military Review, and other journals.*



[*Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neo-Conservatism*, Ben J. Wattenberg, Thomas Dunne Books, 384 pages]

## Right-wing Liberal

By W. James Antle III

BEN WATTENBERG is an engaging television commentator and by almost all accounts a nice guy. But if *Fighting Words: A Tale of How Liberals Created Neo-Conservatism* is the best in post-Iraq War neoconservative apologetics, the movement is in far more trouble than the defeat of John McCain would suggest.

Where Wattenberg focuses on his personal story as a former presidential speechwriter, campaign adviser, and author, he is a charming and gifted raconteur. When he shifts into ideologue mode, his latest book becomes reminiscent of a Max Boot op-ed—one can't quite shake the thought that it might have been ghosted by a paleoconservative satirist writing under an assumed name.

True, there are some unmistakable differences. Nowhere does Wattenberg call for anything as outlandish as raising vast armies of illegal aliens to man the latest crusade for global democracy. The *Fighting Words* author is more of a happy warrior than a cold ideological enforcer. But like Boot, a great deal of what Wattenberg writes—inadvertently and in some cases deliberately—makes the paleos' case that contemporary neo-conservatives are really the “boat people of the McGovern revolution” rather than real conservatives.

Perhaps this is understandable. Although present at the creation, Wattenberg was always more reluctant than some first-generation neoconservatives to sign up with the Right. He remains a registered Democrat and recounts fond memories of his years as a speechwriter for Lyndon Johnson, a president with whom he still substantially agrees. He adopts a tone of sorrow rather than anger—much like Joe Lieberman's con-

cession speech after losing the Democratic primary to Ned Lamont—when talking about the way his party has turned its back on the legacy of hawkish senator Scoop Jackson.

This vestigial loyalty to the party of FDR, Harry Truman, and LBJ comes in handy for Wattenberg's latest project: rehabilitating, even humanizing, neo-conservatism. And how better to do so in an era of liberal resurgence than to drop the conservatism and emphasize the neo? Neoconservatism, he complains, is too often “confused with conservatism, with the key differences never quite understood.”

Wattenberg works hard to make those differences plain. Rejecting Ronald Reagan's formulation that government could be the problem rather than the solution in favor of a “muscular role for the state, and for America in particular,” he writes, “I have never been against government, big, small or medium size.” Wattenberg specifically defends the programs of the Great Society, saying, “in general, the ideas they espoused made sense.” This includes laws requiring automobile manufacturers to include seatbelts—such a measure “does indeed have Constitutional backing through the Interstate Commerce Clause,” he writes, reasoning like a Warren Court justice—and much of the War on Poverty.

“We should (reasonably) protect the environment,” Wattenberg continues, apparently burnishing his non-conservative credentials. “And poor people should get health care.” Wattenberg even distances himself from Charles Murray, an American Enterprise Institute scholar and important domestic-policy thinker often identified with neo-conservatism, for claiming in his landmark book *Losing Ground* “that the Johnson programs were among the principal culprits that were driving America down.” Wattenberg disagrees, though he does concede some of LBJ's handiwork was “taken overboard.” “On balance,” he writes, “the Great Society has helped the American people. How far would an elected official get today if he ran on a platform of eliminating Medicare?”

If this is what passes for conservatism in America today, neo or otherwise, how far indeed? But perhaps this is the point. “Today, it is said that the country has moved to the conservative Right,” Wattenberg notes, “but governments controlled completely by Republicans run deficits to increase domestic spending, much to the chagrin of conservatives and some neo-cons.” None of this bothers Wattenberg, however. He writes that “many neo-cons have no visceral dislike for moderately high big-government spending provided the programs can be shown to work and can be changed if they don't. I extend that to most of the so-called pork-barrel and earmarked spending.”

Wattenberg goes out of his way to bolster the liberal credentials of leading neoconservatives and vice versa. He quotes former House Speaker Tom Foley as saying, “Scoop [Jackson] was the closest one in the Congress I can remember to a European Social Democrat.” On the other hand, Wattenberg maintains that Lyndon Johnson was “in some important ways ... a neo-con.” So was Hubert Humphrey, whose 1970 election to the Senate after having served as Johnson's vice president was “a national win for the neo-conservative notion that a candidate could be liberal, kind, tough on domestic issues, and a winner.” Even Bobby Kennedy is described as “having some neo-con tendencies,” though Wattenberg says Ronald Reagan also fits the bill because “he hated Commies, and prior to becoming governor, was a liberal Democrat.”

There are some old Democrats Wattenberg won't claim as his own, however. He chastises Francis Fukuyama for using the phrase “Wilsonian realism”: “Woodrow Wilson was a racist.” But Wilson is a rare exception. Wattenberg boasts that liberal journalists “toilet trained by the neo-cons” must now “grudgingly accept the media-savvy, intellectually studious neo-cons in a way they would never have accepted criticism from rigid, old-fashioned conservatives.” Wattenberg says “to use an old union phrase, it is the conservatives who are the free riders” benefiting from neo-

conservative media access. He even brags that he once refused to sign off as "From the Right" when filling in for Robert Novak on "Crossfire"—"a modest neo-conservative act"—because "neo-cons are not necessarily people of the Right."

At this point, one almost feels compelled to defend neoconservatism from Wattenberg. The first generation of neo-conservatives ably reacted to the excesses of liberalism at home and abroad. Many of them were more animated by domestic policy than foreign affairs. Unlike their successors, they understood that government actions often have unintended consequences. They proved effective critics of liberal policies from the late 1960s onward—unlike Wattenberg, most of them opposed those aspects of the Great Society that benefited people who did not work—and had a hand in conservative successes like Reagan's supply-side tax cuts, deregulation (no longer in vogue), welfare reform, and even ending the Cold War on terms more favorable to the United States, though we should be grateful Republican presidents did not always heed the neo-cons' advice in this last area.

Wattenberg touches on some of this, especially in his chapter on "the social issue" where he remembers working with Richard Scammon on *The Real Majority*, a book that influenced no less a conservative than Pat Buchanan. He brought some of Wattenberg and Scammon's findings to Richard Nixon's attention as they tried to peel the Silent Majority away from their ancestral home in the Democratic Party. Wattenberg graciously thanks Buchanan for this by smearing him as someone who sees "an evil Mexican wetback in every bathtub." There is nevertheless a real connection between neoconservatism and the Silent Majority—many of the same trends that pushed the neocons rightward also accounted for the new Republican sympathies of conservative Southern Protestants and Northeastern ethnics.

But even at their best, *National Review* senior editor James Burnham warned that neoconservatives had never broken with "the emotional gestalt of liberalism, the liberal sensitiv-

ity and temperament." The neoconservatives opposed Soviet Communism and the New Left, but not the administrative state or big government. They did not reject liberalism *per se* but continued to embrace the liberal policies that they had supported before they were mugged by reality. So a neoconservative can support the civil rights movement but oppose affirmative action, approve of Medicare but resist Barack Obama's health plans. Moreover, neoconservatives frequently relied on social science data to prove what ordinary people knew from tradition, religion, the Constitution, and common sense.

That's a tough thing for Wattenberg to grapple with as he equates neoconservatism with Scoop Jackson's 1972 Democratic presidential campaign slogan: "Common sense, for a change." So naturally, he doesn't contend with it, instead arguing, "My kind of neo-con was for the Bush doctrine before there was one." Most Americans, chastened by the Iraq War, clearly don't regard this kind of foreign-policy thought as common sense. The fact an adventure so closely associated with neoconservatism is in no small part responsible for the Democrats' recent political victories—and the electoral repudiation of the Republicans—will make liberals unlikely to take the neoconservatives back, no matter how much Wattenberg emphasizes the movement's liberal roots.

As Wattenberg's personal memoir, *Fighting Words* contains some amusing anecdotes and interesting stories. Yet even as a sympathetic portrait of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority and the neoconservative role in Reagan-era anticommunism, it is less valuable than, say, Jay Winik's *On the Brink*. As a defense of the neoconservative worldview, it doesn't stack up to early classics by Irving Kristol or Norman Podhoretz and any number contained in later anthologies, such as the Mark Gerson-edited *The Essential Neo-conservative Reader*. Its account of how neoconservatism helped build the Right's think tanks and intellectual institutions could also use more meat.

That's not to say the ideological component of the book is completely useless. *Fighting Words* does deliver on the promise of its subtitle: Wattenberg has shown more clearly than any paleoconservative critic ever could that neoconservatism is at heart a liberal creation. Those critics should thank him profusely for telling the tale. ■

W. James Antle III is associate editor of *The American Spectator*.

## Off Base

*Continued from page 20*

on the state and national levels. If Jindal were white, he might be hardly more notable than Mike Huckabee, another favorite of the base. But because he is the son of Indian immigrants, he will have an advantage if the party wishes to diversify—in fact, he's pretty much the only nonwhite Republican who could be a contender in 2012. He converted from Hinduism to Catholicism and is a strong pro-lifer, so the base should not have any problems with him on those fronts as they did with Mitt Romney, whose Mormonism and pro-choice background made him suspect. If a deep-red state like Louisiana could vote for him for Congress and governor, then the rest of the traditional Republican rank and file should not find it difficult to vote for him either.

Jindal booked himself into a Christian conservative fundraiser in Iowa in November to introduce himself to Hawkeye State voters. While he would have to give up a re-election bid in Louisiana to run for president, he may feel after Obama's victory that he's the one Republican who can unite the party's traditional base with the emerging diversity current. ■

Sean Scallon is the author of *Beating the Powers That Be: Independent Political Movements and Parties of the Upper Midwest and Their Relevance for Third Parties of Today*.

# Manchester Disunited

Ten days after that space in time occupied by the triumph of the placeless Obama over the even more placeless McCain, 55 delegates, observers, and persons of

interest to the Department of Homeland Security gathered at the downtown Radisson in Manchester, New Hampshire to discuss ways by which they might leave the country while standing their ground. 'Twas the Third North American Secessionist Convention, hosted by the Middlebury Institute and its anarcho-witty director, Kirkpatrick Sale.

I drove to Manchester via Governor Dewey's New York State Thruway and President Eisenhower's Interstate and Defense Highway System—Republicans were into socialist giantism long before the Bushes burned. In the passenger seat sat Pat Weissend, curator of our local history museum and one of the nation's foremost grave hunters. (I told Pat I was going to report that he sang Air Supply tunes all the way to New Hampshire, but I cannot tell a lie. He did hum Bon Jovi—same difference.) En route we detoured to Natick, Massachusetts to find Henry Wilson, Grant's second vice president, and while I was sitting in a room the next day listening to rambling speeches in the momentarily radicalized Radisson, Pat was getting lost in Boston scouting out dead Unitarians. There are lots of them.

The conference was duller than those of previous years, perhaps because the imminent de-Ovalizing of George W. Bush has produced a collective sigh of relief. That will last until Secretary of State Clinton cheerleads the American war machine's bombing of some rag-tag Muslim country for its insufficiently feminist domestic policies.

At the convention, I was delighted to visit with my friend Carolyn Chute, the Maine novelist and voice of the rural poor, whose new novel, *The School on Heart's Content Road*, marks her very welcome return. I also joked around with the hearty Dexter Clark, the gold miner (proprietor of "Mining Our Own Business") and vice chairman of the Alaskan Independence Party, whose hardy crew of go-it-aloners has a fellow traveler in Alaska's First Family. Governor Sarah on the stump was no more a secessionist than Mitt Romney, but as Dexter points out, "she slept with an AIP member for seven years" and surely something rubbed off, so to speak.

The whiff of crackpottery trailed a handful of the delegates. They are easily mocked, though I prefer to spray whatever bile I produce at people who do real harm—Masters of War, Defilers of the Republic—than at a helium-voiced, 51-year-old, polyester-encased alien who fancies himself Ambassador from Uranus. Still, the disconnect from the reality-based community is unsettling.

A Texan boasted of turning his back when the Pledge of Allegiance is recited. Pledge author Francis Bellamy is a neighbor of ours, geographically if not temporally, who shared the totalitarian "Nationalist" philosophy laid out by his cousin Edward in the 1887 dystopian novel *Looking Backward*. But conspicuous displays of disrespect for the pledge, flag, or other symbols of the United States seem, to this sentimental American, bullheadedly bad ways to persuade

one's neighbors to consider the alternative. Anyone who has neighbors, and not just contempt for his neighbors, understands this.

I bleed sympathy for 51st state secessionists everywhere: Shasta California, Upstate New York, Yooper Michigan. As for those who want out of the U.S.—noncontiguous Alaska and Hawaii ought never to have been admitted (jigsaw-puzzle makers agree!) and only the most costive liberal or chickenhawk conservative could fail to be charmed by the Frost and maple syrup patriots of the Second Vermont Republic, which drips Vermontishness.

Over drinks I asked Kirk Sale if putting the gloriously, whimsically, seriously localist Vermonters on the same program as mad tinfoil hatters doesn't do the Green Mountain Boys a disservice. Kirk, author of enduring works on the Luddites and SDS, has roots in the New Left and an admirable distaste for edict-issuing. He says that purges and excisions smack of right-wing socialism and neoconnery (not to be confused with the Scottish Nationalist Sean Connery). Point taken. Still, the nut quotient this time was too high even for an indulgent sap like myself.

Saturday was my birthday, and Pat and I drizzled it away drinking New Hampshire beer (Smuttynose) in a dive bar while feeding the juke box to keep The Pogues in our ears.

I met my love by the gas works wall  
Dreamed a dream by the old canal  
I kissed my girl by the factory wall  
Dirty old town; dirty old town

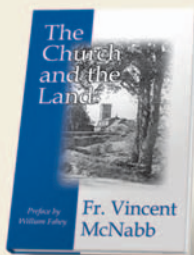
The young drunks at the other end of the bar sang along, in love with their dirty old town on the Merrimack. To each his own. ■



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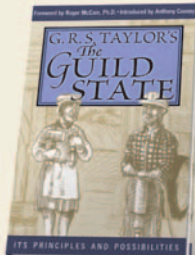
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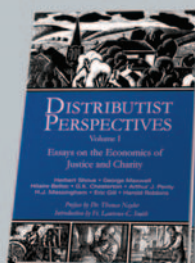
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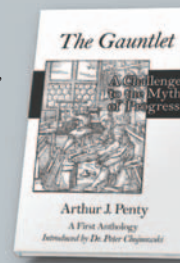
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